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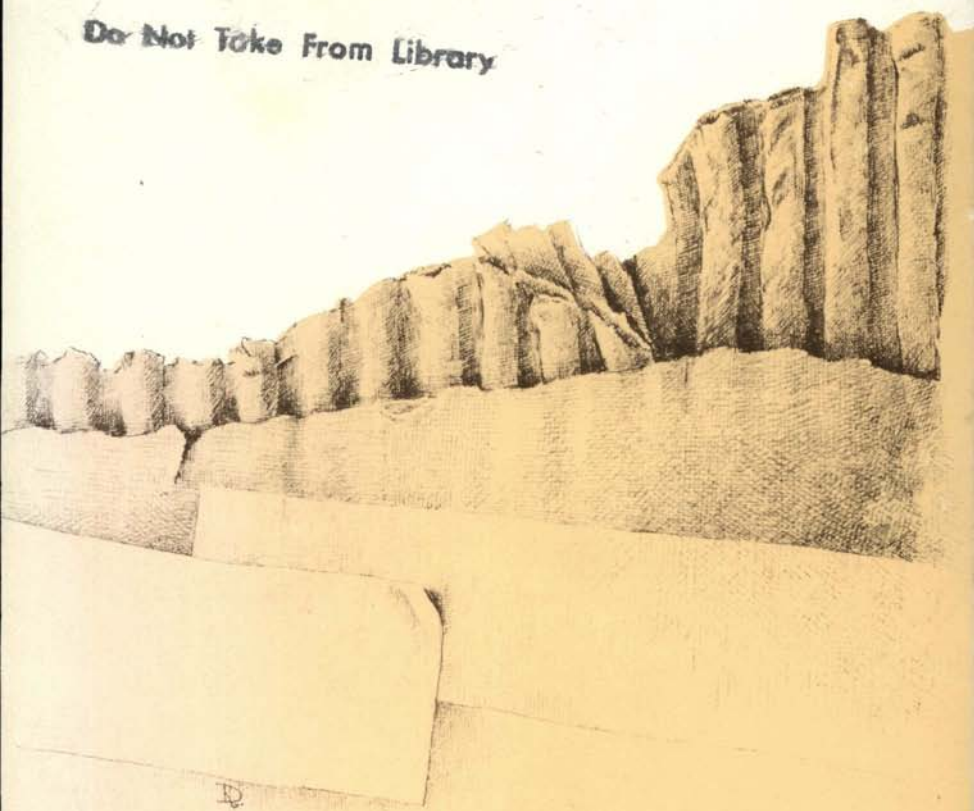

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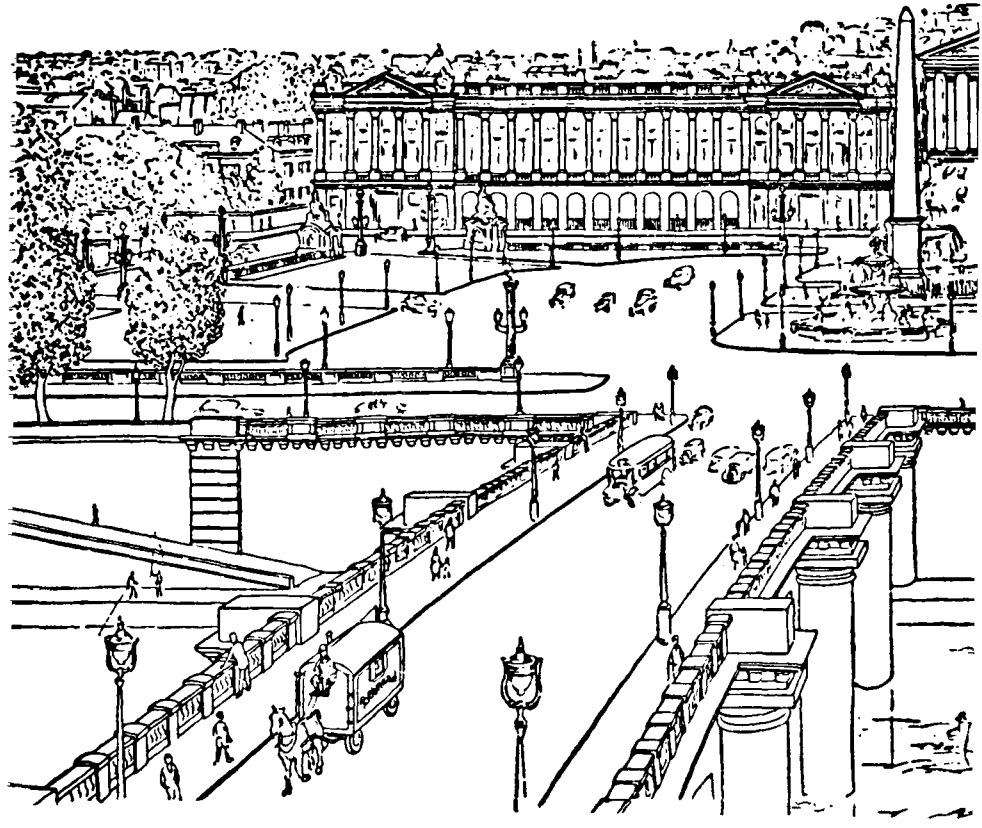

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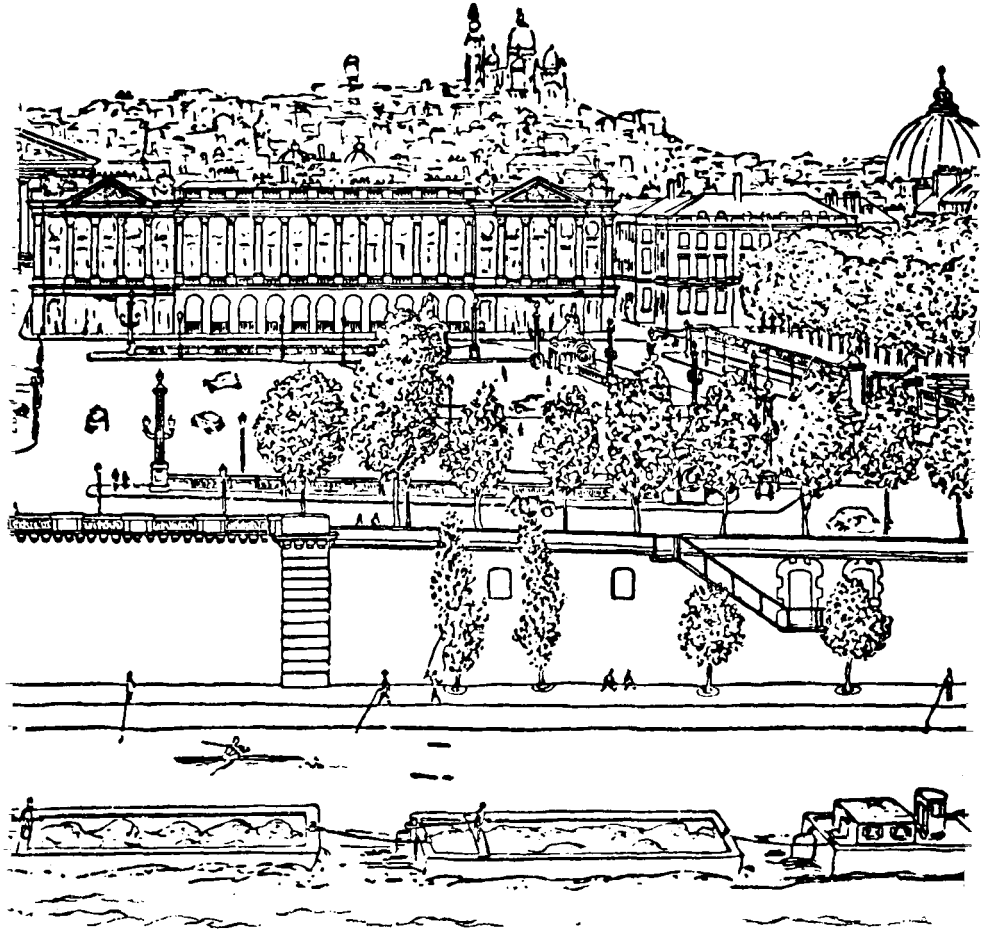

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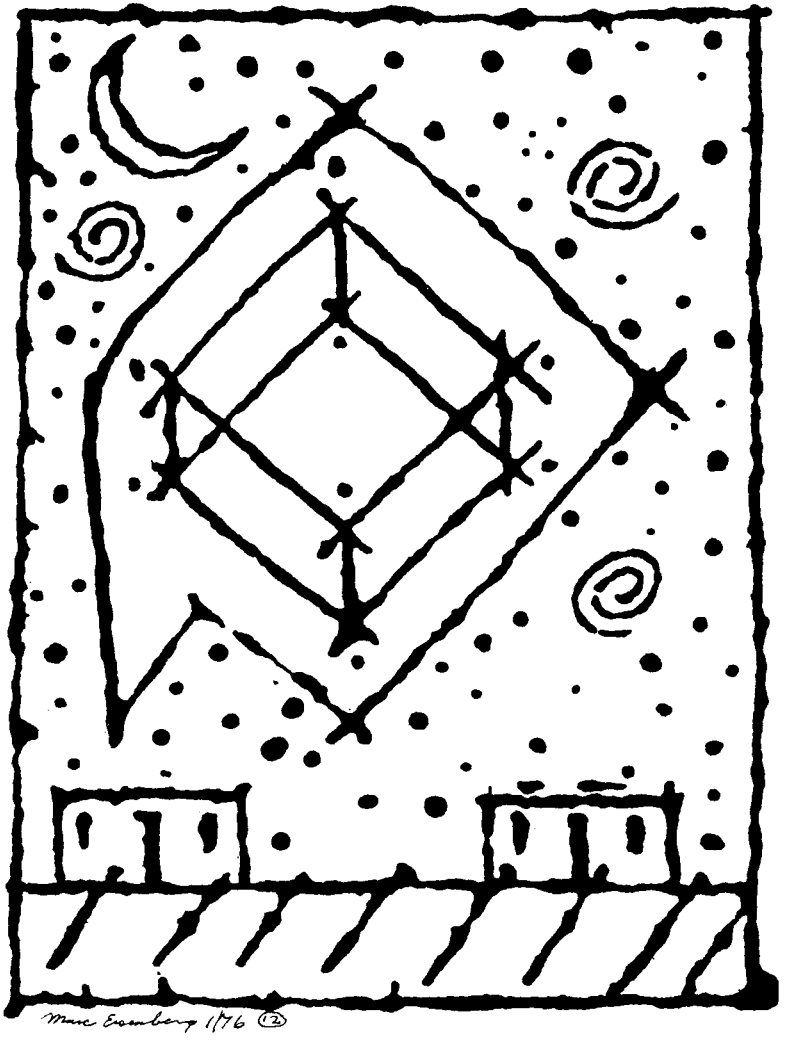

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Four Poems by W.S. Merwin

ISLANDS

Wherever I look you are islands
a constellation of flowers breathing on the sea
deep-forested islands mountainous and fragrant
fires on a bright ocean
at the root one fire

all my life I have wanted to touch your ankle
running down to its shore
I beach myself on you
I listen
I see you among still leaves
regard of rock pool
by sun and moon and stars

island waterfalls and their echoes
are your voice your shoulders the whole of you standing
and you turn to me as though your feet were in mist
flowers birds same colors
as your breath
the flowers deliberately smell of you
and the birds make their feathers
not to fly but to
feel of you

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DAYS

Red birds flashing among high leaves
between sea-foam and snow
clouds revolving voices of light
climbing the pass at sunset
all that remains of them we are
now

and of walking in the silence of bright lava fields
seeing
broad frozen black river that I know
from childhood
breaking up in the spring
breaking up long ago
in an old picture
as I saw when we looked at it together
and so there was no
sound through the suspended silver
reflections and the air

and of lying
together on beaches like forms of your body
and of watching the peak dive for the full
pearl of heaven

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MOUNTAIN DAY

With one dear friend we go up the highest mountain
thousands of feet into the birdless snow
and listen to our breaths in the still air
for a long time beside the observatories
later we stretch out on the dark crumbled
lava slope looking
west at the sun yellowing the clouds below
then we go down past the wild cows to the cabin
getting there just before sunset
and eat by the fire laughing at what we have
forgotten to bring
afterwards we come out and lie
braided together looking up
at Cassiopeia over the foothill

SNOWLINE

Turning climbing slowly in late spring among
black trunks of high pines
talking of our lives few white words flying
up into fringed boughs
unexpectedly we catch sight
across an immeasurable valley
of the long peak capped with snow and slanting light
that we saw far above us at morning
now appears scarcely higher than we are
cloud-cliff of moonlight by day
standing still we feel we could touch it
days distant in gleaming air
then we see footsteps of snow climbing all around us
into white sky

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James Paul

THE RUIN

Stately, green-shuttered, midwestern
In its space of grass, The House;
But beyond this, weeds in the buckling tar,
And a rotten net hangs unimpressive.
Past this is the ruin of real need,
They never needed it and now it's ruined.
Here no doubt servants pumped the bug spray
(Sounding a hissing fanfare for the soirée,
One might say). Now it's a mess; the gold
Fish bowl, stone benches and the little bridge
All strung with gummy vines. But who
Would have missed it: stripes and ginny punch,
The small embarrassments, the chinese bench
And the fish? Why all this new trouble
For such careful melancholy? Who
Needed you then, who notices now?
You stink and are hard to walk through,
No crocuses grow and your bugs are gross.

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Two Poems by Edward Hirsch

GARBAGE

Work drives you like wind
between suburban houses, emptying cans.
You are invisible as air
and as necessary, more efficient
than a flood leveling cities,
sweeping across plains; this city
can't survive without you.
Its houses are a body
releasing fluids, endlessly
emptying and filling with breath,
cleansing blood. Its refuse
is your job, and you
are devoted to it
like a disease, or the icon
of an obscure god.
Waste is your fool's gold.
And so you trek across lawns,
sweeping through alleys, relaxing
on your way back to the dump.
How much you would despise company!
For centuries you have been working alone.
On the patio you are silent
as fog, an atmosphere so regular
that even the family dogs
conspire to ignore you.
Sometimes through the glass
you see a husband throwing
his arms up in despair, or a wife
stumbling into a closet.

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Once you watched as a woman
unbuttoned her housecoat
in the kitchen, and laid down
on the cold floor; and you knew
then that you would never quit,
anxious and lonely, wounded for good.
She moved away many years ago
though at night you still
remember the dry sheen
of her body, reflected against tile
like the sun on a plastic cup.
And during the day you dream
of opening the door, listening for
the sound of children in the window
or the tumble of footsteps
on the stair. She doesn't hear you
entering, and looking down
at her composed body, you sense
strange violence, the light
throbbing in your skull, the rich
tumult of fluids inside you.

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AT KRESGE'S DINER
IN STONEFALLS, ARKANSAS

Every night, another customer.
One night it's a state trooper,
the next a truck driver going all the way
to Arlington, Georgia. Tonight
it's only a tourist, a northerner.
I prefer the truck driver.

You can trust a truck driver.
Tourists are effeminate, though good customers.
I hate it most on Thursday night
when that hog who wants me to go all the way
with him comes in; some state trooper!
I'd rather go to bed with a pig, a northerner!

Well, maybe not a northerner.
They do have peculiar ways.
Still, they're good customers.
I think I hate that fat trooper
as much as I hope my truck driver
comes back on Thursday night.

Only three more nights!
How long does it take a good driver—
course he doesn't have a Buick like the trooper
or a sportscar like that northerner—
to cross Georgia? If I didn't have a customer
I'd go all the way

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to Georgia after him, all the way!
I bet I could send a message with that northerner.
You know truckers are the safest drivers.
He's not only my favorite customer
but I dream about him at night.
Maybe I could send a telegram with that trooper

but then I hate asking that trooper
for favors cause he wants favors on Thursday night.
Still, I wish he was here instead of that northerner.
I wonder if he would ever take me away
with him. I wish he was my husband instead of my customer!

O maybe this Thursday night that truck driver, my favorite
customer,
will push aside the trooper and flick ashes at the northerner,
o and maybe he will take me away.

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Two Poems by Dan Masterson

TO A DOCTOR WHO WOULD NOT SEE ME

I passed your office six times today
wanting to turn up the broken walk
and slip inside to wait at the coat rack,
hoping your nurse would say: well
as long as you are here I suppose—

But I only looked in, recalling
your leather table and knives, feeling
the lump on my arm, rubbing it
hard to make it go away.

You will find this note when you come
outside and will check the back seat
and floor for me and drive off
in the dark, your mind racing, your wife
alone at home, miles away.

Picture me now, my breath hot
on your kitchen window, my eyes
sweeping over her like a tongue.

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MISSING IN ACTION

The thud always awakens her
where she sits at the livingroom window
gathering a shawl tight at her neck,
her fist a pale brooch,
its veins hard and swollen.

She has heard it every night
since he went overseas:
the muddy jeep backfiring at the curb,
his flag-wrapped body bumping to the ground,
stars flicking light on the hedges
as he rolls toward the house.

Her cane finds the corner of things
and she makes her way to the veranda door,
its screen speckled with bugs
lured by the pantry bulb.

At the top step,
she shakes her stick at the darkness
and mutters a private curse;
she leans on the railing and takes
each step as it comes, swallowing
quick gulps of air and straining
to see the lawn.

On down the walk she goes
to the far side of the hedge
where the streetlamp lumps its shadows
on the leaves.

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She pokes at the bushes and calls him
in the voice she used above his crib
three wars ago, pleading for her bambino,
expecting to see him young and warm
in his bunting, longing
to feed at her breast.

She unbuttons herself to the waist
and probes among the brush,
disturbing nothing but a squirrel,
stiff in the leaves, the mouth
dried open in its fur.

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Everette Maddox

NEO-PURITAN PICNIC

Enough inside jokes,
let's move this bash out
under the stars. Heap up
fireworks, funny hats
and heroin here on
the river bank. And
let's hold hands because
it's getting dark.
Look up! a thunderbolt
hurtling across the sky,
spelling out Stop me
if you've heard this one.

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Ed Ochester

WASHING YOUR PENIS

One is solicitous of it
as a unique Himalayan rosebud
smuggled out of Nepal.

The great painters never picture men
washing it with care—it's always the ladies of
Degas, Degas, Degas—though even
Thomas Alva Edison
did.

The mirror tells you it is utterly ridiculous.

Still you powder it.
Some perfume it.

Our culture would be different if
like certain monkeys' tails the penis
were prehensile.

My father used to say
"if you shake it two times after urinating
that is sanitary,
if you shake it three times
you'll go crazy."

Watching it crowned with soapsuds,
goofy as a homecoming queen
at a cornball college,
one understands finally
the limit of intelligence.

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Phil Boiarski

BLOOD SOUP

She called the white ducks with a soft
Clucking of her tongue and they came to
Her busy hands for the hard corn she shelled.
Taking a fat one up in her arms, soothing the
Down with her cheek, she cooed and sang to it,
While the eager beak bit at her palm cup.

She bowed the graceful head down to sleep
Beneath the perfect white wing and keeping
Her place on the long neck, like a finger in a
Book, she brought up the porcelain bowl to
Hold in her knees, in one motion. I can still
See the shining blade layering through the
Orderly feathers, through the sleeping veins.

Headless, featherless duck swam in clear water,
Dark blood, carrots and apples, black prunes,
Parsley, pepper, thyme until the meat fell
Away from the bone and pieces floated among the
White kluski clouds in dark brown broth. Every
Bit of the down she saved for small pillows.
When she gave them to my children she said,
"They won't remember me, so tell them these
were from the duck feather woman." They took them
Eagerly from her knotted fingers.

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Sam Abrams

how to cut a throat

for gil sorrentino

most people have absolutely the wrong idea of how to go about cutting a throat. the right way to do it on animals anatomically similar to humans such as dogs, sheep, veal calves and very young pigs—emphatically not on full-grown pigs or even half-grown cattle—is not at all as most people imagine like slicing a baloney, a mistake i myself made on the first few throats i cut, putting the edge of the knife against and at right angle to the throat and drawing it across while pressing. wrong.

the correct, or at least a far better method is to place the point of your knife at the soft spot on the side of the throat just below the junction of the jaw and the neck. if you put your finger on your lower jawbone and trace it back to the place where the bone turns upwards then move your finger down a bit you will find the spot. now place the point of your knife on this spot, with the cutting edge facing *outwards, away from* the ventral surface of the intended victim. thrust the knife through the neck, guiding the dull, back edge of the blade closely against the tough bundle of neck cords, esophagus, gullet and vertebral column. when the tip of the knife comes through on the same soft spot on the other side of the neck, slash *outwards,* away from the victim.

the advantages of this method over the baloney slicing method are numerous.

1st and most important. in the slicing method you can easily miss just those veins and arteries you wish to cut by slicing too low on the neck where the major blood vessels are protected by the neck attachment ligaments or the relatively tough

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food and wind rubes. i know a feller whose neck was cut by the baloney method and survived with no ill effects but an ugly scar and a somewhat grayish complexion due to the severing of the superficial blood vessels which supply the facial skin.

2nd, in the stab and cut-out method, your hand is moving away from the victim and in the same direction as the gout of blood, thus it is far easier to avoid getting your sleeve splashed with blood.

3rd, if you will run through the movements required for both methods with an imaginary victim, you will find, with the victim in any position relative to you, it is hard to get more than your forearm muscles into the baloney slicing motion, while you can easily, with the throat of the victim at the level of your own throat or lower, get the whole weight of your shoulder and upper body into the stab and slash-out movement, making for a quicker, cleaner, kinder, less painful kill and far less fatigue for the killer, who not unlikely has a day's work ahead, since once you set up for slaughtering, you might as well get it all done.

finally and not least important, in the baloney method you will dull the edge of your knife against the vertbrae. in slaughtering for the table, the faster the operation goes, the better the quality of the meat. after cutting the throat, you should not have to pause to resharpen your knife, but proceed immediately to opening the victims achilles' tendons so that it may be hung while the heart is still pumping, so as to insure a complete, clean bleedout. in general, it is one of the first principles of slaughtering and butchering never to cut on bone with a knife.

the method described is only to be applied to stunned or restrained and unsuspecting victims. the beginner should restrict himself to stunned animals. i repeat, this method should never be used on pigs more than 2 months old or cattle more than 3 months old, for which an entirely different method of opening the blood system for draining—called "sticking"—should be used.

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A.F. Roberts

PARROTS AND AFRICAS

My weakness is for color words.
It doesn't begin to annoy until such time
As the parrots and Africas are
Once too many times labored.
But all the time I'm better at
Disguising this effect: by the time I'm thirty,
A critic will have to know me very well,
Or command a subtler
Understanding of poetry than most,
To detect the artificiality
The unfair insemination of balanced images,
Which are really plums off the same tree
And of invariable taste.

I have always felt a trifle guilty, for myself,
Reading the introductions to other peoples' poems,
When I come across the sentiment that such and such
Effect is "one that he achieves successfully."
I have a deep and guilty feeling, stemming
From my color words,
That effects in poetry
Which achieve something successfully over and over again
Ought to be viewed with suspicion.

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The Rookie Season

Lamar Herrin

He hoped his voice wouldn't change tonight. "Old Man River" was coming up and he could do the accent, the bent back, the glory-struck expression. He knew how to use the whites of his teeth and eyes. He might very well—if he felt the song rolling and he got in safe—be able to cry. There were a few people he'd like to stun. His mother, for one, who sat off to the side and played the high school piano. Miss Mathinson, his fifth grade teacher, was another. She had nodded and clapped her long noiseless hands after he'd sung and tap-danced his way through "Mississippi Mud," accompanied by his friends—Cub Scout Den 43, Hillcrest Drive—at his back.His friends too, he'd like to stun them. They were all dressed the same—blackfaced and black barefooted, black stockings over their crewcuts, red bandanas around their necks, ragged long-sleeve shirts his mother had daubed with mud, and jeans patched for the occasion—but they were in it for the arrow points which they'd get whether they won the competition or not. All they'd had to do was hum and beat

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their feet for "Mississippi Mud" and now to hum and sway and pull on a rope for "Old Man River." But Dick wanted to give them a taste of real feeling, real tragic suffering. They looked like a line of whipped little monkeys, blacked up as they were. They didn't even know how to keep time. Waldeck and Conklin looked especially dumb, as if they'd just woken up and wondered where they were. He wanted to put them in the River, in the rhythm of captive life. He wanted to put the whole huge gymful of people there.

But if his voice changed . . . He wasn't sure what it meant, that phrase. It had the vagueness of a whispered adult future about it, at least as his mother used it. "We'll have to see when your voice changes . . ." she would say, referring to a song she might teach him. "Yours will probably change soon, then we'll see . . ." From what to what? Would his voice get lower, rougher, handsomer? Would he open his mouth and grunt? Would his mother tell him in time so that when he stood in front of an audience he would be able to hit a note without transposing an octave, as she called it, without that awful clunking switch? But there was something in her tone—and in her failure to soften, brighten, or even finish the phrase—that made Dick believe that "voice" and that doleful word he heard at school, "character," were the same. When his character changed . . . When he was walking along with his ten year old voice and character and the earth opened and took them under and gave him back—if he wasn't swallowed up himself—another voice and another character that might fit in with nothing he had known . . .

A change in voice, a change in life . . . It was coming. It might come now during "Old Man River." He might be soaring to "skeered o' dyin" and fall, beat his voice on the silence and fall. He might sink past the double-drop in "wind up da-id," past the deep river-breath of "I gets weary," and make a sucking frog-croak in the mud. Or two weeks from now when he was supposed to sing western solos for the Kiwanis Club. Would he tumble with the tumbleweeds? Would the ghost riders fall out of the sky?

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His mother didn't seem worried. She sat with her back to the audience and three-quarters of her placid face turned to him. As she ran through the introduction Dick and his scout troop began to sway. Her head bobbed in rhythm. Her first big nod meant the chorus would begin to hum. Her second meant Dick would begin to sing. She should be worried sick. As a singing and dancing teacher, as a mother to her son, she had always stressed one golden rule: "Never offend and please when you can." But if his voice changed tonight after he had pleased the audience silly with "Mississippi Mud," where was the end to the offense, to her disgrace? Possibly only his father, Sarge Dixon, wouldn't mind since he barely tolerated the singing and dancing and the costumes anyway. He'd probably welcome a change in Dick's voice, probably applaud the offense and his wife's, Susan's, disgrace. Dick picked him out of the crowd, a sandy-haired man going gray, who'd played baseball for a living and now sold sporting goods in his decline. Was that what his Dad was wishing? His Dad winked at him and his Dad didn't often wink. Dick looked away just as Conklin and Waldeck and the others began their safe, sleepy hum. The music aroused him, brought up a wave of eagerness from inside, and five seconds before he began to sing he had a thought that neither his Mom or Dad would understand: if his voice was about to change before every song he sang then every song would have an added punch because it might be his last.

He barely remembered those days when as a pie-faced four and five year old he traveled from city to city with his mother and others to entertain the wounded veterans. When dressed as Santa Claus, a fuzzy-wuzzy bear, Cowboy Joe, he sang for men in bathrobes, men in wheelchairs, when they all wanted to shake his hand and his mother protected him against too many wounded close-ups. Tonight his audience was other Moms and Dads, teachers, grade school, junior high and high school principals, boy scouts and eagle scouts and a lot of older boys. They sat in assembly rows, on the familiar scuffed floor, in the sticky gym smell, beneath basketball goals, gym ropes and rings. They looked accustomed to being entertained, to

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preferring one cub scout to the next. They looked politely frozen in their lives. Dick had the song not to entertain them, but to thaw them out, to get them wet in the River.

The humming became a staticy buzz, the music slowed, welled. His mother struck his chord. For that pleasurable instant before he opened his mouth, he felt possessed of a secret, superior to teachers, parents and scoutmasters. And bold. If his voice changed right now he would use it like a rake, like coarse sandpaper, and gladly offend in the interests of Truth. He wondered, too late, if he could change it himself. "Cull-ed fok work on de Mississippi . . . " It trembled, it rose in ripples that would soon rise in waves, but the voice was his mother's and his, clear tapwater they turned on and off in practice, not the angry yellow sludge of the River. "Cull-ed fok work whil de whaite fok play . . . " No, it wouldn't change tonight. Although his head was bowed to his prayerful hands he felt the approval of his mother's smile as he drew out "play." It was like a warm vapor he performed in. Pleasing, soothing . . .

"Don't look up 'n don't look down . . . " Each note was sharp, emphatic. His sincerity was outstanding. His voice capable of swallow-flights within its register. But somewhere Dick heard what he'd later identify as a squealing rabbit who'd been taught to sing.

"He's not going to do it anyway. It don't make any difference then if he comes with me."

"Doesn't," his mother said.

"Well, he's not," his father said, "so that's that."

"Why, Sarge, did you have to pick precisely the Sunday when *our* son is going to sing the anthem in *our* church to get tickets for a baseball game? Was it to spite me?"

"I already told you. The Rawlings man—that's in St. Louis, for your information—sent them. What'd you want me to tell him, that my son is gonna cockle-doodle-do in church and can't come to the biggest double-header of the year?"

"Please control your tongue! He might hear."

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"It'll just mean the pennant, that's all . . . Anyway, it's good business to go."

"That's not the real reason. You could go alone if it were just a matter of business."

"I could, but I'm not."

"I don't like you like this, Sarge."

"Sure you don't. Sure you don't, Susan, when I try to give Dick a hand and get him outta the mess *you* got him in, when I try to take him out with his Dad for a change, sure you don't . . . "

"It's not a 'mess' as you so vulgarly call it. He's just worried he won't be able to hit all the notes."

"Yeah, well, he told me his voice is changing . . . "

" 'Nearer My God to Thee', Sarge."

"What?"

"That's the anthem he's going to sing. Think carefully about what you're proposing to do."

"He said he couldn't sing it. That's all I know. He wanted me to explain it to you."

"So you arranged to have the tickets sent, is that it?"

"I didn't arrange nothing, dadblame-it!"

"Sarge, let me ask you a question. Do you think I begrudge you the time you spend with Dick? Do you think I oppose his Little League baseball, for instance?"

"He could be a good 'un. He's got the arm . . . "

"That's not the question. The question is do you think I resent it."

"Resent what? The baseball? He's 4 and 0 already this year . . . "

"You're not listening! Why won't you listen to me!"

"Sure I'm listening, it's just I know what you're gonna say, that's all. That Sunday's for church and Saturday's for baseball, but it won't work. I got it straight from him—his voice is changing—so Dick and his Dad are gonna take a trip and catch a double-header, and if all you know how to do is cry . . . well, that's a big problem, a nice little slump you're in, Mrs. Dixon."

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And Dick crouched on the landing, dry-eyed himself, but confused to the point that what he'd heard downstairs seemed momentous, seemed a moment above that split in the earth where he, unresisting, felt the pull of two grips both of which were angry enough to *split him.* But he hadn't split. His father was going to take him on a trip and let him holler instead of sing. Maybe the soft sobs he heard seemed distant—and musical—because they came from the other side. Maybe the remorse he felt seemed strangely satisfying since he'd first listened to his father stomp down the hall and slam the door.

Sarge was Sarge and not Harry Dixon because he'd played third base—the hot corner—and taken charge of the infield. His career had lasted as long as it had—he was up and down in B, A, and double A—because he practiced the fundamentals and was a great pep-talker. He could get an extra inning out of a worn-out pitcher just by talking to him, by talking up under his ribs. He probably should have managed, but didn't. He could pep-talk customers too and even his wife to the extent that she believed a store in a class D town meant a revised, respectable life. Did his wife ever question her respectability or ever mistake Sarge's pep-talk for communication? She must have done both at one time or another. Too many referred to her husband as "the old jock," and Susan would understand, though meant well, the phrase was a filthy liberty. On the other hand Sarge could chatter her out of a blue mood which she must have appreciated too. It's difficult to tell about Susan. There's a lot there of the Sunday matron, which she was. There's a lot there of the infighter too, who used a political short punch almost hidden from view. But usually what's there stays shut behind her symmetrical face, behind her wide-set blue eyes, behind the plugged keyhole of her chin's cleft. The scene with Sarge was an exception. When Sarge took Dick out of the house at four a.m. that Sunday morning, however, and wife and mother said nothing, adamantly refused to leave the bed, that was Susan in spades.

Dick was too excited to worry much about his mother. His

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rehearsals of "Nearer My God to Thee"—when his voice had almost buckled under high notes, when he'd felt razor-slits up and down it like the start of a sore throat—seemed weeks ago. He was going to his first Big League game, and a double-header at that, between his team, the Cardinals, and those mean, slugging, stubble-bearded Dodgers. He would see Musial, Slaughter, Harry the Cat Brecheen, Marty Marion and then the baleful-sounding Duke Snider, Carl Furillo, Gil Hodges. He wouldn't be nearer to God but he'd be right there when Harry Carey exclaimed "Holy Cow!" and gulped for partisan joy or when Stan the Man laced one out on Grand Avenue. Grand Avenue! Maybe his Dad would let him spend two or three innings catching baseballs on Grand Avenue. He could see one arcing out beyond the flapping pennants, out beyond the right field pavilion, dazzling white on St. Louis blue, straight from Stan's bat and into his glove. He could hear the Hallelujah chorus from the crowd, a thousand times mightier, manlier, than when he heard it on the radio, and Harry Carey soloing, "It might be, it could be, it is! Holy Cow, folks! Stan hit that one out on Grand Avenue!" If he could be in his room listening, in Sportsman's Park watching and on Grand Avenue catching, then he'd know what it all meant, the size of it would come true. But if he was in his room listening he'd be in the church singing and the offense would not be forgiven. He snuggled down in his seat and fervently worked at the pocket in his glove as his father drove along his street, past sapling trees, crabgrass lawns, low-slung houses, past the Hillcrest Drive Cub Scout troop asleep in their bunk beds. And *their* Dads too lazy on Sunday to drive two hundred miles to St. Louis. Dick watched his. Sarge let the speed roll, snapped off a match for his cigarette, steered routinely as if he'd already won the race. Then he pep-talked his son into the back.

"Better get back there and take a snooze. Eighteen innings, buddy, don't wanna have you sleeping through the ninth. Attaboy! Make you a pillow of that glove. I'll give you a shake when The Man comes up."

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But The Man right now was his Dad. The matter was too complex to say that his Dad had rescued him, even Dick knew that. But there were opposites poised that Dick was aware of, outlooks, encampments for a life, and Dick was now in his Dad's. He felt easier there, but then he was drowsy, out of the spotlight, and the warm roasted smell of his Dad's cigarette made sleep now, at the start of this adventure—two hundred miles, a double-header, the Rawlings man, a night in St. Louis—less and less of a risk.

He was still sleepy when Sarge talked eight pancakes down him and poured on twice as much butter as Susan would have allowed. "Get you some more if you want 'em. Hey, bring us another plate! That little nigger boy Black Sambo 'd put you in the shade, buddy. Or you holding out for the hot dogs and the Gresidick? Boy, lemme tell you, your mother'd tan your hide if she thought you was going to drink a Gresidick beer in the ballpark. She'd probably tan mine too. But what she didn't know sure wouldn't hurt her, or would it?"

When they crossed the Mississippi, Dick woke up. The tire-pitch sharpened, rose, and even hugging sleep he knew he was up in the air, so high up that he scrambled free and bumped his head on the ceiling to look. He had never seen so much water in his life! He had never seen such a heavy, steady brown mass of anything in his life! He jumped from one window to the other looking for waves, boats, fishermen, something to fit his imagination, but the river was blank, the sun hitting dull on its surface. It wasn't the color of mud. Its color was dead, rotted—he thought of the fur of an animal carcass—except the river moved. It moved as if where it kept coming from and where it went didn't matter at all, as sluggish as a beast. He rolled down the window. He may have imagined a smell of soaked vegetation and fish because he couldn't account for the smell by what he saw. One fish or a willow trailing its slips would have been a photograph for him; he could have carried it home. But the river showed him an ageless, illegibly-lined skin that would remain in his memory only as force, as something never to be trusted.

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"That's some little creek, eh, son," Sarge said, now on the bottom lands of Missouri.

"I didn't know it was so big."

"Big? Take a good look where we're at now cause when that hoss floods you'd be looking at water."

"All the way here?"

"Here and way up there," Sarge said, pointing to a rise in the land, some man's safe property, a motel. "What's that song of yours say? Old Man River don't know nuthin? Well, he don't know nuthin about where to stop floodin, either."

Dick met his Dad's smile in the rear view mirror then felt his mouth wince, as if he'd tasted his breakfast. That song didn't know nothing either.

The Rawlings man was a fat, worldly, laughing fellow who gave Dick a baseball autographed by the entire Cardinal team and who took them to a downtown hotel where he'd reserved a room for the night. Their hotel was catty-corner from the one where the Brooklyn Dodgers were staying for the series. Where the cunning, curve-balling Preacher Roe was staying and the awesome Don Newcombe. Where they slept and ate and terrorized the bellboys and waitresses. Dick got a good look at it by craning his neck out the window. It didn't come to a point at the corner like his own hotel. It was "beveled" as his Industrial Arts teacher would say, but that beveled part was a long stone slab. His hotel was made of red bricks, theirs of huge sandy blocks. Their windows were craggy dark eyes, his were unprotected and had girlish white curtains that somebody like Carl Furillo would probably rip into pieces before he left town. He wondered if they would leave town tonight or if—and this clutched at his stomach—they would still be there when he was asleep. He looked way down to their doorman. Then he remembered the doorman to his own hotel, his paid eyes, his scratchy face. Theirs was a heavy squat bell-shaped man, obviously a henchman, a crook. Dick backed off from the window and scuffed over to the bed where his Dad and the Rawlings man were drinking bourbon from the bottle his Dad

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carried in his glove compartment. Instead of worrying about the Dodgers they were talking about business, about footballs and basketballs, which in the middle of the summer made no sense at all. The Rawlings man had an unlit cigar between two swollen fingers. He had button eyes pressed down in a lot of waxy fat. Dick wanted to ask him about the Dodgers but waited until his Dad acknowledged he was there.

But without acknowledging it his Dad put his arm on his shoulder and kept talking. "... and it wouldn't surprise me if he brought that Wilson glove. His mother's in charge of his manners but she don't know pee-diddly-squat about gloves."

"What about it, son?" the Rawlings man said, holding out his hand.

Dick gave him the glove which he flipped over once like a dead fish and tossed back to him. "You'll be lucky if they let you in the stadium with that flap of leather," he said.

"I'm still breaking my Rawling's glove in," Dick lied. "It's a Whitey Kurowski!" His Dad gave him an encouraging pat on the shoulder. "Aren't I, Dad?"

"Sure, buddy. We'll have to see about breaking it in *real good* when we get back."

"Whitey better see about breaking his in," the Rawlings man commented scornfully. Whitey was the Card third-baseman, down on the hot corner like his Dad. "He's already let in enough runs to clinch the pennant."

A moment of silence followed this blasphemy, then Sarge himself added, "The touch of a blacksmith."

Why did his Dad say that? Whitey was a gas-houser, one of his Dad's favorites. The Rawlings man rumpled his face which meant he agreed. And suddenly in spite of the baseball he'd given him, Dick distrusted the Rawlings man, distrusted the cynical effect he had. "You'll see," Dick exclaimed to his Dad, "we'll sweep both ends of this twin bill!"

"Not with Whitey down at third and that knuckle-head Slaughter in right," the Rawlings man laughed back.

Wheezed. The Rawlings man couldn't get from first to second and everyone knew Enos Slaughter was the best hustler

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of all time! The Rawlings man lived in St. Louis. Maybe he was a fixer, an oily old crook!

"We got the Man!" Dick said.

"And the Man's got a bad case of bat-itis. They oughtta have him batting eighth."

"Dad!"

"You're talking to the fella'd should know."

Dick was going to shout that he didn't know but for a moment he had peach-fuzz in his mouth and his throat was tight and the sound that came out was hoarse, like the croup. He had a flash of himself making the same sound, standing alone in the church choir. Now he was frightened. His Dad brushed it off.

"You need a Gresidick, son."

"Hit me with another spot of your home-brew, Sarge," the Rawlings man said.

"I shoulda got a fifth. We'll be drinking Gresidick ourselves by the seventh-inning stretch."

"Call room service. They'll bring it up."

"It's Sunday."

"Shit, Sarge, this is honky-tonk town."

His Dad called on the telephone and the Rawlings man leaned closer to Dick and almost caved the bed in. Dick put on his glove and hammered at the pocket. But the Rawlings man talked right through that slapping of leather. "The Cards'll put up a fight, but this ain't their year, Dickie. The Dodgers've got all the guns. They got two tough niggers out there and those boys play rough. You ever see a nigger play baseball, Dickie? They'll tear your balls off, boy, you watch 'em! And that big jig they got pitchin today'll throw it right at your head. What're Slats and the Redhead gonna do about that? I betcha we don't turn a double play in either game. It ain't gonna be pretty, but whatthehell, son, it's your first Big League game. You'll get to see the Man all right, even if he ain't hittin. And don't get me wrong, I've been a Cardinal fan before you were a gleam in your Daddy's eye. This just ain't their year, that's all."

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He didn't see Grand Avenue. It was covered with people, cars, streetcars, newspapers, wadded wrappers, exhaust. Across from the stadium it was lined with bars. Knots of men—some with boys, some even with ladies—pushed out of the doors, got into the crowd on the street and argued, sweated, elbowed, bringing with them the damp pulpy odor of beer, cigarettes and sausage grease. The pennants on top of the stadium hung limp. The stadium wall—what he could see of it—was badly scarred. When he got close enough to touch it he discovered it was made of an unmonumental stucco and the stucco had craters where the plaster crumbled out. He got stepped on, kneed trying to stay alongside his Dad. Once he tripped over a curb and butted the man in front. Then when a wedge of older boys drove through and knocked him aside, he found himself sitting on a concessioner's table of caps, pennants, toy bats, Cardinal dolls and binoculars even he thought were junk. The Rawlings man reached back and got him, returned the concessioner's insult, and delivered him to his Dad who was standing on the sidewalk, wobbling from the blows. Grand Avenue was a motley river, moving in chugs up to the stadium entrance. There it backed up and Dick heard the voice of its angry balked current. The sun left a hazy afterglare in the air.

This was no place for a Stan Musial home run. The trophy would be a dough-ball thrown to the fish. When the current quickened at the turnstile and sucked him in he hoped his Dad would take him straight to his seat.

But he didn't. His Dad told the Rawlings man, "Let's get a Gresidick chaser," and carried Dick down beneath the stands and away from the brief glimpse of the field he'd had: the bright white foul lines, bases, and on-deck circles, the trim cut of the infield, the watered green grass; dugouts where the players milled, the very distant fences; the pitching rubber, the resin bag, the plate; the shape Dick knew best set like a jewel in sultry St. Louis.

"Take a sip, son. See if it suits ya."

"Don't look like it does. Why don't ya get him a Bud."

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"You want a Budweiser, son?"

"Make us a boilermaker, Sarge."

"A greasy-dick boilermaker!"

"It'd kill the taste."

"Right! But get in here close. We wouldn't want Stan the Man to see."

As his father sloshed bourbon into the two paper cups, Dick slipped away and got a hot dog and a coke. The beer had tingled on the roof of his mouth then left an aftercoating as smooth as slime. He washed it down with coke, which, itself, was too syrupy. The hot dog left a pinkish impression on the bun. Across the tunnel was a table with gallon jars of mustard, catsup and relish, but the tunnel was like an underground river with creeks cutting off to the beer, hotdog and concession stands. Dick tried fording it and got swept along before breaking free and making his way back to what he thought was the table he had seen. After he had seasoned his hotdog he looked for his Dad. He saw the Rawlings man. He had a sunburned egg for a head with deep sweaty furrows. He humped up like a boulder at the river's edge. But his Dad wasn't with him. Dick waited and looked at some blown-up photographs of old-time ballplayers high on the walls, at ballplayers with beanie-like caps and knicker pants and gloves not much larger than their hands. He recognized Dizzy Dean who, he discovered, resembled his Dad. He studied Dizzy and put the hex on the Rawlings man: Get away! Go step in a manhole, you tub of lard! He counted to twenty and when he looked back the Rawlings man was gone. Good and gone! But without the Rawlings man he didn't see anybody he knew. The unshaven, unsmiling ballplayers on the wall began to look like the Brooklyn Dodgers and Dizzy, who was always smiling and who was more than life-size, got loosely focused and finally, he remembered, traded away.

Dick didn't even have his ticket.

Then his Dad found him. His Dad's face was also loosely focused, the brown specks in his green eyes standing out like freckles. "Hey, buster, you gotta stay close! This is St. Louie,

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remember?''

''I got a hotdog and a coca cola,'' Dick said.

''Okedoke.''

''And look at Dizzy, Dad! He looks just like you!''

''That's Joe Medwick, son.''

''No, over there, there! That's Dizzy, isn't it?''

''Oh, sure, that's ole Diz.''

''You ever see Diz play, Dad?''

''See him? I was sixty feet, six inches away from him which ain't far enough.''

''You hit against Diz!''

''I gave it a try.''

''No joke! Wow! What happened? I mean what'd you go?''

''If I recollect ole Diz got me out.''

''Like 0 for 2 or 3?''

''0 for somethin.''

Dick did stay close as they started for the up-ramp and closer still as they emerged in sight of the field. He reacted to the space and the clear bound colors and shapes by tugging at his Dad. ''The Cards and the Dodgers, Dad! I bet we sweep it!''

Sarge couldn't say. He was peering at the ticket stubs and trying to get a reading on their seats.

''That Rawlings man went on home, then, did he?''

They started up a second ramp, to the upper deck. The people around them began to rush. A man with the full deep tones of an organ chord was standing by home plate singing the Star Spangled Banner. When Dick saw him again from the upper deck, the man had risen with him, he had sailed up to ''the land of the free'' without a quaver in his voice, with a range that Dick's mother wouldn't believe since Dick could only hold out his arms to describe it, never sing it himself. Somewhere in that range was a ten year old voice that hadn't changed, but had grown and kept growing so that now it filled Sportsman's Park. Then he watched the man walk into the Cardinal dugout and the Cardinals themselves trot out. He watched himself walk in and trot out and for an instant a melancholy cloud dimmed it all since he was ten, unlucky as a

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singer, and like so many others struggling to find his seat.

"Did that Rawlings man . . . ?"

"He's gonna stay for the first game. Then he'll leave."

The Rawlings man sat on the other side of Sarge and for nine innings ate humble pie until he had it plastered red on his face. Thirty-five thousand people roared as the Cards and Musial and Brecheen ran over the Dodgers and knocked Don Newcombe out in the third inning. If Newcombe threw fast, the Cards swung faster. If he curved and cunny-thumbed the Cards whipped it right past his ears. The fearsome Dodger base runners got gunned out. The poleaxe Dodger bats got chipped down to playthings by Harry the Cat's stuff. The only balls that got torn off were Furillo's when that mafioso right fielder tried to bowl Del Rice over at home and went down in a swarthy heap five feet away from the plate. Musial went 3 for 4. A fan nearby had a radio. Stan's home run, according to an amazed Harry Carey, probably landed in Illinois. It was helped on its way by three "Holy Cow's" with Carey bellowing like a bull. At first Dick thought everything hit in the air was going out, but when he got the upper deck angle straight, no one had to tell him the difference between a Musial screamer and a Snider pop out. The Duke went 0 for 4. He grumbled and kicked at the dirt like a spoiled Little Leaguer. Out in center field he took a razzing from the fans. Slats and the Redhead turned three double-plays and everything Dick saw was as pretty as that pie smashed in the face of the Rawlings man.

His Dad shared some of his enthusiasm and some of his bottle of bourbon with the Rawlings man. In the early innings he gave Dick some pointers on the play—"Now, that's the way you field a hot grounder, get in front and come up with the ball." or "Hit that low curveball up the middle, always up the middle."—but by the seventh inning stretch the Cards were so far ahead he lost interest in the game, in the Big League field, in the Big League scoreboard, in the Big League uniforms, in, it seemed, his son, and forgot to stand up. Then Dick wondered if he could stand up. He wondered why his

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voice got sluggish. Why his face was flushed and blistery since they sat out of the sun.

. . . It wasn't all the bourbon and Gresidick. It was also what Susan had done to his capacity, it was the parts of Sarge that Susan had fenced off, it was the Big Top she'd thrown over, say, three-fourths of his life. What Dick saw was his Dad sneaking like a guilty kid out from under the tent. And it wasn't that Sarge had lost interest in his son. He'd gained interest in himself. What he thought was himself. The last thing he could remember, of his own pure volition, he'd been. So that when the Cards were piling it on the Dodgers in the bottom of the seventh and Sarge was splatting bourbon in the cups and Dick had half his heart on the sunlit field and the other half sunk in doubt, it wasn't just Sarge he heard mumble to the Rawlings man, "You line up a couple of real honky-tonk broads and I'll get the kid in bed." That was also Susan . . . .

Of course Sarge could stand up. Even the Rawlings man could stand up. When the last Dodger went down swinging, both did. They even talked. Dick's Dad said, "I'm gonna go take a leak. You stay put, eh. Don't wanna find you somewhere out in the left-field corner."

The Rawlings man said, "Root those stumblebums home, son."

Dick watched them get bumped around and lost in the crowd going down the stairs and out on the ramp. He watched the contemptible Rawlings man steady his Dad. The last he saw was his Dad's sagging hiccuppy laugh. Then he pounded his glove.

And twenty minutes later began to watch the second game alone. It was a terrible game. The Dodgers turned it around. They hit line drives, home runs, bad hoppers, Texas leaguers as if the Cardinal pitchers, as if Howie Pollet, already had one foot in the showers. The fielders fielded as badly as the pitchers pitched. The hitters broke their backs on curves and froze on fastballs. Dick yelled at the umps, he yelled at Leo the Lip. He yelled as if he could fill up one of the two empty seats beside

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him and until he couldn't yell any more. His voice didn't change, it just disappeared. What was left rasped like corn shucks. When Musial struck out for a second time, and it was clear to anyone the Cardinals were beaten, Dick wanted to leave. A lot of fans did. But his Dad had said "stay put." But if the Rawlings man had left why hadn't his Dad come back? Were there two Rawlings men, one for the first game, one for the second? Dick tried to shout some more, but it hurt. It was as if in shouting because he missed his father he were senselessly mocking his mother, and that hurt too. He watched the shadows stretch out past second, the stands empty. Some boys got out on the pavilion roof in right and taunted the police. Another jumped over the fence and ran crazy patterns on the field, like an uncooped dog. By the eighth the stands seemed cavernous and the light towers higher, slanted closer in. They had tiers of eyes, so far unlit. He heard a disgruntled murmur from the few fans left and then at the end of the ninth their scuffing feet.

The game was over and the Sportsman's Park janitors had begun to sweep up the trash.

Dick went looking for his father.

He searched through the upper deck asking the stragglers and the janitors if they'd seen a man like Dizzy Dean. One man told him he'd seen Dizzy himself out on that very mound, the mound and infield the ground crew was now covering with a black tarp.

He got out on the runway that surrounded the upper deck, squeezing between two burly tee-shirted men and running past the women in the hotdog stands, past their throaty voices and beehive hair. "Hold on to yer britches," one said and Dick ducked into every men's room on the runway and stooped down to look into the stalls. He saw plenty of shoes but not the oxblood ones he had to polish.

At the ladder going up to the pavilion roof he told a policeman he'd gotten separated from his Dad. The policeman told Dick to go down to the lower deck, where directly behind the plate there was a lost-and-found office that also handled lost

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boys. But Dick wasn't so lost that he told the policeman his father had been drinking. His mother had taught him the laws.

Going down he realized the one thing he couldn't do was tell his mother about this. He stepped on peanut shells, paper cups. Score sheets flew out from under his feet. The ramp was almost empty, which was lucky because he couldn't stop, didn't want to see more of that dirty gray stucco and crumbling plaster. If he did stop he thought he would cry.

He ran half the horseshoe of the lower deck, along the box seat rails, before he got to the offices behind the plate. One that sold advance tickets was still open, the others were closed. He stood behind two men in the ticket line and having now stopped he felt his blood rise and sting in the roots of his hair. He slapped at his glove, somehow kept in motion, darting in and out of line, apologizing to a man who'd come up behind him, scanning the empty green seats for what he now admitted might just be a crooked knee or a flung arm of his father. The ticket salesman didn't even look at him.

"What game, how many, where?"

"Could you open the lost-and-found? I'm looking for my father."

He thumbed through a stack of blue tickets, made some marks on a paper, eyes down. "Next office, second door."

"But it's closed! I went there!"

"Tomorrow morning, ten o'clock. I sell tickets here."

If he went back and got the policeman his Dad might land in jail. Land in jail? "Get a little drunk and ya land in jail." That line sang itself solemnly, right through the turmoil in his head. It stood him up stiff with a shock. For a moment the things that were happening to him lost their faces, their names, and moved across the sky like thunderclouds shifting slowly into place. He looked around. Men buying tickets, the slicked hair of the man selling them, men in straw hats with red bands bent over their trash, a structure of concrete, stucco, wooden seats and up above a maze-work of rusted girders, painted I beams and the web of wires that was a baseball sta-

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dium. No ladies, no players, no Stan the Man. He ran down the first aisle he came to to the field.

No one stopped him. The ground crew had finished its work. It was the first base dugout, the Cardinal dugout, he scrabbled over. Inside he saw some broken slats on the wall, spike marks on the floor, long unevenly joined benches, a jagged bat handle, scraps of a scorecard, tobacco juice stains, shredded cigarette butts. The smell was like a dirty clothes hamper, and something cool from a cave. He turned and ran almost crying to the mound. The black tarp shook out before him with rubbery squirts of air. His feet plopped. Up on the mound the footing was solid, the tarp tight. He gazed from the left field corner to the right and marveled that anyone had hit a ball that far. The scores were down on the scoreboard. It was covered with square holes. Behind the limp pennants in right was Grand Avenue. The stadium loomed over him and the light towers loomed over it. The sky was full of low-bellied clouds. Then slowly, almost reluctantly, he faced where the plate should be down sixty feet, six inches of wrinkled black tarp. He knew Dizzy Dean and others had stood there when the black was rolled off and the diamond was alive with green grass and straight white lines. It didn't do any good. The black was on. The plate, the hitter, the catcher, the ump were just his wild inexperienced guess.

He tore out his lungs trying to shout. He discovered a new voice that was brambly it hurt so, a voice that would never hold a note but that ripped at his feelings like small animals and birds, until he'd used that voice up too. In the deepening shadows of Sportsman's Park he stood there, powerless to make a sign. No one came and even if someone did he didn't know what he could say. He'd said it. Yesterday he was propped on his bed surrounded by baseball cards and listening to the near-fabled events that had taken place here, here on this diamond, and today he was at the center of it and everything was gone. He couldn't say that. And against all that he couldn't say and didn't know he began to feel a rage, a rage that jarred him like the approach of a freight train, then roared

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in his ears. He took the autographed ball the Rawlings man had given him out of his pocket and socked it once in his glove. He was about to commit a definitive act, about to write an unerasable word, although he didn't know that either. He just went into a furious windup and threw. The ball flew with his fury, his rage, high over the tarp, far out of the strike zone, and thudded on the wooden wall beneath the foul screen. It landed on grass. For a moment the roaring inside ceased, the stadium held the breath of its hollowness, and Dick looked into the thumb-sized core of that ball. He saw only the endlessly raveled rubber, only the fine tight strips as black as the tarp. Then an usher-janitor came to take him to his Dad.

But not to coddle a lost kid. He took two steps at a time and a hard handhold in carrying Dick out to the very left field corner his Dad had warned him against. Even Dick, dazed as he was, noted the irony. His Dad had a perch overlooking the bullpen, but that irony escaped him. He was mainly thankful that Sarge had found a friend—not the Rawlings man but an old salt of the ballpark—to share his stories with. Both were sprawled out on the stairs. Dick took up where the usher-janitor left off. First he sat his Dad up, then the other. After brushing off their backs he hid their two empty bottles under the seats. Then he picked peanut shells and pieces of popcorn out of his Dad's springy hair and tried to straighten it. There was nothing he could do about his face. The freckles swam high in his eyes and his nose had pebbly red high spots and deeper pits. Thinking he'd better, he gave his Dad a few gentle slaps on the face which, as his hand lingered, became pats. He loved and forgave this now old man who'd peed in his pants. And he strangely wished that Sarge could live out his life far from the shame of having to recognize his son.

"I'm Dick, Dad. Don't you know me?"

But he didn't. His perfectly harmless smile only meant he recognized something he'd imagined for himself, something before wives and sons that Dick supposed he had never had.

There's not much left to say about Dick's first Major League

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game. Susan will be waiting for them to come home. Sarge will lie, Dick will lie, but Susan will know. But what in God's manlessly clean and righteously blossoming pleasure garden can Susan do about it? Dick had forsaken the church choir, he'd crossed the Big River, he'd come to St. Louie. He'd seen Stan the Man hit home runs and Stan the Man strike out. He'd thrown his first pitch. Susan had better study these facts well and listen to their rough music because it's her voice she stands to lose. Dick and his Dad have already lost theirs.

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THE FRANCHISER

by Stanley Elkin

Part I

Past the orange roof and turquoise tower, past the immense sunburst of the green and yellow sign, past the twin golden arches, beyond the low buff building, beside the cherry red lettering of the windows of the discrete hut, the dark tophat on the studio window shade, the red and white longitudes of the enormous bucket, coming up to the thick shaft of the yellow arrow piercing a field, in the smashed puddle of color, he feels he is home. Is it Nashville? Elmira, New York? Elyria, Ohio? St. Louis County? A Florida key? The Illinois arrowhead? North? St. Paul, Minn.? Northeast? Boston, Mass.? The other side of America? Los Angeles? Ohio like a badge? The Texas udder? In Colorado's frame? Wyoming's postage stamp? Michigan like a chipped, eroding bays of the Northwest? Bellingham, Washington?

Somewhere in the packed masonry of states.

He guides the pale blue Cadillac up the perfectly banked ramp, around one loop of the creamy cloverleaf, like a slot car, feeling himself in the large, long automobile, lovely, and down, shooting the smooth rapids of traffic, into the wide cement of American delta. Like a water skier brought, still on his feet, to shore. He waits at the lights, in some darker medium now, a rich topsoil of city asphalt, waving to a man next to him, miming petition, throwing his thanks like a blown kiss, and on green edges forward, to his right. Coming into the service station. (There is cash in his pocket. Credit cards. A checkbook. Licenses. His name and address a block braille on a dozen plastic cards.) And stops, out of the way of the pumps. And seeing the attendant, still out of politeness, jumps from the car, goes to him, the attendant, a man who barely glances at him. Waits. Walks with the fellow as he goes behind the Ford Impala at one pump to copy down the number of the plate onto the clamped carbons, accompanies him to the driver, smiling at the silent transaction of

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Stanley Elkin
The Art of Fiction LXI

Nancy Crampton

The following interview was taped in September 1974, in St. Louis without aid of sherry or sunlight streaming through high windows. Although we did walk through leaf-piled streets to Elkin's office on the Washington University campus, I didn't discard my prepared questions along the way. When the tape broke midway through the interview, Elkin was not upset. Despite these defiances of interview conventions, the three hour interview demonstrates the wide range of Elkin's perception, candor and wit.

Elkin is a medium-sized man, forty-six years old. The day of our talk he wore corduroys and a white turtleneck sweater

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and could easily have been mistaken for a distinguished poet. Physically intense, Elkin shifted about in his chair, sometimes hunching over the microphone like a body puncher, sometimes sitting back with his hands behind his head like a satisfied president. His voice constantly juggled humor and seriousness, but his answers were always direct, without qualification.

Elkin's novels are: Boswell *(1964),* A Bad Man *(1967),* The Dick Gibson Show *(1971) and* The Franchiser, *which Elkin was working on at the time of the interview and will be published this June by Farrar, Straus and Giroux; he is also the author of* Criers and Kibitzers, Kibitzers and Criers, *a collection of short stories (1966) and* Searches and Seizures, *novellas (1973).*

INTERVIEWER

Your father was a salesman. I can't help but wonder if he was a master rhetorician—as many of your characters are—and if the passionate speech that characterizes so much of your fiction has its genesis in your early environment.

ELKIN

If not a master rhetorician, at least a master salesman. He sold costume jewelry, and I went with him once on one of his trips through the Midwest. He had a vast territory. He had Michigan, Minnesota, the Dakotas, Wisconsin, parts of Indiana, Illinois, Missouri—an immense territory. I was with him in small Indiana towns where he would take the jewelry out of the telescopes, which are salesmen's cases, and actually put the earrings on his ears, the bracelets around his wrists, and the necklaces about his throat. This wasn't drag, but the prose passionate and stage business of his spiel. The man believed in costume jewelry, in rhinestones and beads, and sang junk jewelry's meteorological condition—its Fall line and Spring.

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INTERVIEWER

Is there something of your father in Feldman's father?

ELKIN

Yes, and a great deal in Feldman. Probably more in Feldman than his father.

INTERVIEWER

Your mother's name was Feldman. Do you bestow, like Nabokov does, details of your own life on your characters?

ELKIN

No. There is little autobiography in my work. When I was growing up, we had a bungalow in New Jersey which we visited in the summers. Everybody in that small community was named Feldman and was either an aunt or cousin of mine. I just found it comfortable to use the name Feldman. For a long time before I ever published anything, all my characters were named Stephen Feldman. I hadn't read Joyce, I didn't know about Daedalus. But it didn't make any difference what story it was or what age the characters were. I named them all Stephen Feldman. And then, only later, years later, when I was writing *A Bad Man,* did the name come to mean anything to me—Feldman the felled man.

INTERVIEWER

You've said that you spent just under 183 years going from Freshman to Ph.D. at Illinois.

ELKIN

Right.

INTERVIEWER

Were you writing stories while getting your M.A. and Ph.D.? You were in the Army too, weren't you?

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ELKIN

Yes, for a couple of years—1955 to 1957. The remarkable thing, remarkable for me anyway, was that I discovered that I could write only after I passed my prelims. I had been writing and chopping away at stuff, at this story or that. I took all the writing courses, but I had no style—or, rather, I *did* have a style but it wasn't mine. I had William Faulkner's style. I studied a year in bed—never got out of bed for an entire year, had all the books around the bed. I'd get up to teach my classes, of course, but I taught from eight to ten in the morning on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Then I'd return to the apartment and get back into bed and not get up until it was time to teach my classes again. But at any rate, I decided to give myself some time to write, and I wrote a story called "On a Field, Rampant." It was the first story that I'd ever written which had what was to become my style.

INTERVIEWER

How much influence does your academic training have on your writing? Do you work into your fiction the intricate patterns of imagery that much academic criticism is concerned with?

ELKIN

Well, it depends upon the fiction. When I was about a hundred pages into *Boswell*, I suddenly discovered that I had Boswell in a lot of elevators, and because I had been trained in the New Criticism I decided, hey, this is pretty neat! Elevators. Makes a nice pattern. And so I was conscious of the elevator motif and kept moving him in and out of elevators. In a way it works because a great deal of novelistic fiction is about ascent. Since Boswell was a guy on the make and had this sort of excelsior personality, it was quite fitting for him to be in elevators, on up escalators and to climb stairs. There's one scene in *Boswell* where he's in a Jewish community in Brooklyn, as I recall, to meet a miracle rabbi, and he can't get past the front door. He is not permitted to climb those stairs

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and is stalled. Sure, I'm conscious of symbols and patterns in my work. But this is something I've sometimes come on to only after the fact and then made the most of.

INTERVIEWER

You said in your dissertation on Faulkner that he sympathized with the "egocentric will pitted against something stronger than itself."

ELKIN

Maybe that's what I admire, or what I came to admire, in Faulkner without knowing that it is what I was ultimately to be about myself. But I think it *is* what I am ultimately about. And I think it is true in Faulkner. I think it is truer of me, though, than it is of Faulkner. Faulkner's heroes are often nicer guys than mine.

INTERVIEWER

You also commented on Faulkner's legendizing of character through hyperbole and his repetitive technique. These seem to show up in your fiction.

ELKIN

My editor at Random House, Joe Fox, used to tell me, "Stanley, less is more." He wanted to strike—oh, he had a marvelous eye for the "good" stuff—and that's what he wanted to strike. I had to fight him tooth and nail in the better restaurants to maintain excess because I don't believe that less is more. I believe that *more* is more. I believe that less is less, fat fat, thin thin and enough is enough. There's a famous exchange between Fitzgerald and Thomas Wolfe in which Fitzgerald criticizes Wolfe for one of his novels. Fitzgerald tells him that Flaubert believed in the *mot precis* and that there are two kinds of writers—the putter-inners and the taker-outers. Wolfe, who probably was not as good a writer as Fitzgerald but evidently wrote a better letter, said, "Flaubert me no Flauberts. Shakespeare was a putter-inner, Melville

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was a putter-inner.'' I can't remember who else was a putter-inner, but I'd rather be a putter-inner than a taker-outer.

INTERVIEWER

Are there philosophical, religious, or psychological traditions which are especially important to you?

ELKIN

Like most people of my generation, I fell in love with the philosophy of Existentialism. There is no particular religious tradition in my work. There is only one psychological assertion that I would insist upon. That is: the SELF takes precedence.

INTERVIEWER

Are there particular Existential writers?

ELKIN

Camus. I think he was a wonderful writer. I ate his books up alive in the better restaurants.

INTERVIEWER

Is there a system of ideas within which your fiction could be considered?

ELKIN

No. I'm not a ''thinker.'' For example, I'm working on a novel now called *The Franchiser* about the man who makes America look like America. He owns a McDonald's franchise. He owns a Fred Astaire Dance Studio franchise. He owns a KOA campsite franchise. He owns perhaps thirty franchises. He trades them like a kid with Monopoly cards. What had appealed to me—what had instigated the novel and in a way has instigated almost everything I've ever written—was the *occupation*. I don't know what the thing is all about until I start to write it. Then, as I'm writing, I really do invent ideas, make ideas up. Only now am I beginning to realize what this

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Franchiser business is all about. But there's no thought aforethought.

INTERVIEWER

Reviewers and critics often consider you with the Black Humorists or the Absurdists and with the Jewish-American writers, who are also humorists. Would you care to comment on affinities you might have with writers like Barth, Donleavy, Vonnegut, Heller, Roth, Bellow?

ELKIN

If I have any affinities at all, they are with men like Bellow —and, to a lesser extent, Barth. Certainly not to Roth, who is more a sociologist of the personal than anything else. And not really to Donleavy whose work I admire very much—but who finally disappoints me because he not only writes the same book over and over again, but the same sentence over and over again or the same sentence fragment over and over again. He uses the same characters; he uses the same rhetorical patterns. I find that his best book is not *The Ginger Man* but *A Singular Man*, the book where he finally got it right. Everything else is redundant. Spin-offs from spin-offs as if he learned to write at Mary Tyler Moore's knee.

Barth is wonderful, but the Barth I really admire is back there in the Golden Age of Barth. That is to say, the Barth of *The Floating Opera*, of *The End of the Road* and *The Sot-Weed Factor*. The Barth who takes himself seriously as a metafictionist is a Barth who bores finally. There's some great stuff in *Lost in the Fun House*, and I suppose there are nice little pastiches in *Giles Goat-Boy*, but later Barth really is Barth for Barth's sake.

Bellow I think is a magnificent writer—probably, with Gass, the best writer in America. I just somehow feel on Bellow's wave length. I don't think that he has a reader in America who digs him more than I do. There has not been a single Bellow novel or story that I have not liked, including probably his weakest books—*Dangling Man, The Victim,*

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and *Henderson the Rain King*. *Henderson the Rain King* is not really in his mode—it's more in my mode than his—but I like *Henderson* for its ending, which it seems to me is a paradigm for the endings in a great deal of modern fiction. Henderson is carrying the kid in his arms in Newfoundland or wherever, and he begins to run and dance—dancing, running, leaping, jumping, moving. I find that whole concept very, very exciting. It's the leap of faith; the only way finally to make any sense out of the world is simply by saying "yes" to it, and jump up and down in it.

INTERVIEWER

Writers say yes or no?

ELKIN

Yes, the binary system. What a writer's message is is totally unimportant. Either he is agreeing with life by affirming, or he is saying life is just a bowl of wormwood.

INTERVIEWER

So you haven't changed anybody's life with your fiction?

ELKIN

Certainly not. Nobody does.

INTERVIEWER

What about Faulkner?

ELKIN

He never changed anybody's life either. Auden went to his grave complaining that his poems never saved a single Jew from the ovens, and he was absolutely right.

INTERVIEWER

In your collection *Stories from the Sixties*, you include stories by Coover and Gass who are often called experimental in their concern with form and language. Do you have affinities with experimental writers?

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ELKIN

I think Gass is the best word-man in America. Coover is a very good friend of mine, and I think "The Babysitter" is a wonderful story, a very successful *tour de force,* and while a *tour de force* is its own excuse for being, a little goes a long way. Vintage Coover to me is not the Coover of *Pricksongs and Descants* so much as the Coover of *The Origin of the Brunists,* or *The Universal Baseball Association,* which are superb novels. Bob is such a good writer and has so many gifts to offer the traditional novel that it seems to me that he works against his own best interests when he goes off to play in his laboratory.

INTERVIEWER

You mentioned *tour de force.* There seems to be a lot of localized *tour de force* in your work.

ELKIN

But it's not *tour de force* in terms of fictive strategy; it's *tour de force* of language and that's, as far as I'm concerned, always legitimate. But look for the language in post-Coover Coover, and it's more difficult to find. There's marvelous language in *Pricksongs and Descants* but it's subsidiary to the experiment with structure. I tell you this for your own good, Bob. The reason I like Gass so much is that Gass is not fucking around with structure. He is fucking around with language. That to me is legitimate and acceptable, and the furthest out you can go is the best place to be. That's what's so magnificent about Shakespeare. Shakespeare wrote very conventional plays, but the language wasn't conventional.

INTERVIEWER

Do you have a philosophy of language?

ELKIN

It's a matter of feeling one's way. It is not instinctive. It's a question of using a pencil, erasing, creating a palimpsest of

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metaphor right there on the page. One gets a notion of the conceit and one is inspired to work with it as a draftsman might work with some angle that he is interested in getting down correctly. That's where all the fun of writing is for me.

I don't read much non-fiction because the non-fiction I do read always seems to be so badly written. What I enjoy about fiction—the great gift of fiction—is that it gives language an opportunity to happen. What I am really interested in after personality are not philosophic ideas or abstractions or patterns, but this superb opportunity for language to take place.

INTERVIEWER

Do you have an impassioned statement about the function or purpose of the novelist?

ELKIN

I just made it. He has no social obligations, it seems to me, unless his wife has accepted a dinner date for Thursday.

INTERVIEWER

Do you have some sense of an audience when you write?

ELKIN

I do have an ideal audience in mind. That ideal audience is a man like Bill Gass, or someone like Howard Nemerov, or any other writer who respects language. But other than that, no notion at all of an audience. I don't think any writer does. I don't think that poor Jacqueline Susann had any notion of an audience. I think she was doing the best she could. There is no such thing as prostitution in writing. One writes what one can write. One writes *up*, though one man's up is another man's basement.

INTERVIEWER

In a *New York Times* review, Josh Greenfield says that you seem to write with the conviction that the world is winless. Do you agree with this?

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ELKIN

Yes, well, we all die, yes? We suffer, correct? The score keeps changing, is it not so? And Mommy holds us on the teeter-totter before we can sit upright on chairs. I don't really care so much about the fact that the world is winless. It is simply a condition that seems true to me. It is just a condition the way a red light is a condition at a traffic crossing. Yet, quite marvelous books have been written about winner worlds. Other people write them.

Indeed, the novel is generally a kind of Christian device where people who are good get their just rewards and where people who are bad are punished. I don't believe that this is the case in life, but it might be a case the novelist wants to make, and great novels have been written making such cases. I don't care so long as the novel is written well.

INTERVIEWER

You've said, "I don't write from memory. I imagine everything." Could you elaborate on the purposes of this approach?

ELKIN

I used to think and I used to tell my writing students that the reason one can't write autobiographically is that one is too close to the material. But that's wrong. I was terribly humiliated when I was in the Army, and I tried to get that down into fiction. I constantly failed, and I kept thinking that I was failing because I was too close to it, but that's not why I failed. The real reason I failed is that you cannot write autobiographically; you cannot write from memory. If you write from memory, the chances are that you will say, "Well, because this happened this way, I will use it this way. Because it happened in just such a sequence I will use it in just such a sequence." Now, life is shapeless, but art, as everybody knows, is shaped. If one is writing from memory, one is writing ultimately a kind of shapeless, amorphous slice of lifeism. Besides, I don't remember anything all that exciting ever happening to me.

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INTERVIEWER

You've said that you believe in inspiration. Does inspiration work throughout the story to give it structure and form, or does it work mostly in the original conception?

ELKIN

Mostly, in the original conception. I think I said that stories come altogether all at once or they do not come at all, but that's rather an overstatement. I'll give you an example. I was reading Mike Royko's book, *Boss,* about Mayor Daley. Someplace in that book, he talks about a saloon where cops, detectives, and bailbondsmen hang out. I saw the word "bailbondsmen" in the sentence, and suddenly it stood out—I don't know why. I had nothing to do with bailbondsmen, I had no memory of bailbondsmen, I had never met a bailbondsman. I'd never put up bail for anyone, but I started to think about the implications of the *word* bailbondsman. Since I begin most stories or novels with an occupation, it struck me that there was a rich lode here, so I knew I was going to write a novella about a bailbondsman. What the novella was going to be about, what the plot was going to be, I had no idea; that was simply a process of inventing as I went along. But the original inspiration—seeing that word on the page and having it trigger the momentum in me—occurred in a swell fell swoop.

Of course, inspiration is an on-going, continuing process in the composition of a book. One doesn't, for example, plot a joke. Like a lot of what happens in novels, inspiration is a sort of spontaneous combustion—the oily rags of the head and heart.

INTERVIEWER

What is your response to reviewers who, although immensely entertained by your novels, end up saying that the whole is less than the parts? Are you concerned with structure and form the way someone like Nabokov or Barth is?

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ELKIN

Although I am immensely entertained by their reviews, I end up saying that the whole is less than the parts. As a matter of fact, I *am* concerned with structure and form and my novels *are* structured and formed. There isn't a novel I have written which does not have a very well-defined structure. *The Dick Gibson Show*, for example, is not a series of isolated episodes; it is a progress. *A Bad Man* is not a series of brouhaha speeches; it is a structure. *Boswell*, less so, although there is a structure there too. *Boswell* was the first long thing I wrote, and I really didn't know quite what I was up to. But I think all my work subsequent to *Boswell* has been rather tightly structured. Now, if people don't recognize the structure, that isn't my fault. Well, maybe it is my fault, but I *hope* it's their fault.

INTERVIEWER

It seems to me that the plots of your novels develop through the protagonist's repetition of action. Do your novels develop largely out of what you have called the "physics of personality?"

ELKIN

Yes, and the physics of obsession. Fiction is about obsession, but there is a distinction between obsession and madness. There is no successful mad fiction. Although I have written a story which *ends* in madness and suicide, it seems to me that novels *about* craziness are always unsuccessful. They become case studies. *The Bell Jar*, for example, is a terrible novel. The only thing that gives *The Bell Jar* any interest at all is the fact that it is autobiographical. We have this greasy interest in Sylvia Plath. If that woman had never killed herself, her books would sell less than mine.

INTERVIEWER

Your characteristic style is, I think, distinguished by its oral quality. Could you comment on the sources of this style? Your father . . .

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ELKIN

I was a very attentive listener to my father's stories and to my father's shop talk . . . this may be the real source of my style. All shop talk, the specialized jargon of a closed universe, fascinates me. Whenever I hear it, wherever I hear it, I'm thunderstruck.

INTERVIEWER

Do you put yourself in situations where you are likely to hear shop talk?

ELKIN

No. Not really, but when I am fortunate enough to run across it, I recognize it and listen to it and try to duplicate it in my writing. Now, some of those rhetorical flourishes, of course, are beyond the shop talk of most people, but it's as though I were giving others free rein to talk as they would if they had my vocabulary. Passion is the secret of shop talk.

A friend of mine here in St. Louis, Al Lebowitz, who is a lawyer and a novelist, had to argue a case before the Missouri Supreme Court, and he asked me if I would drive him to Columbia, the state capital. I did and we went that evening to a restaurant in which there were all of these pols. We were sitting close enough to them so that we both stopped talking ourselves and just listened to these guys talking and it was marvelous. It wasn't just the language of anecdote but the language of impassioned partisan anecdote. Unbelievably beautiful—almost a kind of poetry. What other writers get from geography—regionalism—I get from shop talk.

INTERVIEWER

It seems that your narrators or heroes are professional rhetoricians. There's con man Boswell, salesman Feldman, disc jockey Gibson, lecturer Preminger, and bondsman Main. Are they displacements of the artist?

ELKIN

I wish I *could* talk like these characters—I can't. Sometimes

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in class, if I'm particularly good that day, I can go about twenty-seven seconds, not quite a sixth of a round. But it's the way I would like to be able to talk, and I guess the reason I write fiction—I hadn't ever thought of this before but this is a true answer—is to give myself an opportunity to talk that way.

INTERVIEWER

You said in some comments on Faulkner that comedy is a "quick inconsequential passion."

ELKIN

Inconsequential is the operative word there. Consequence to me is when the bone doesn't heal, when the germ does not do what the penicillin wants it to. Consequence is pain. There can be no consequences in comedy. Tom and Jerry chase each other; Tom falls off the Empire State building and shatters like a dish. In the next loop he has reconstituted himself. Now, I don't laugh at Tom and Jerry, but in a simplistic way, that's the model for all comedy. Nothing bad may happen. There is safety in comedy.

INTERVIEWER

Would you discuss the function of the comic in your fiction?

ELKIN

There is a night-club and television comedian named George Carlin. His routine is the Hippy Dippy Weather Man, and most of his jokes are jokes about the television industry. He makes fun of commercials; he makes fun of *format.* I have yet to laugh at George Carlin because his humor is institutional humor. It is backstage humor. Green Room. It seems to me—and this is a very difficult thing to phrase properly—that noses are funnier than the particular crotchets of network vice presidents. I told you an anecdote yesterday about my friend Herbie Bogart. We were in Max, Indiana, a small town, stopped at a red light and this hick

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came down the street with a piece of straw in his mouth, and Bogart said to me, "Look at that Bozo," then opened the window and said, "Hiya Bozo." That, to me, is absolutely hilarious. I can't really explain *why* it's hilarious, but one thing it has going for it is that it's not institutional, not backstage. It's comedy of the streets. Not just of that red light and crossroads in Max, Indiana, but the vernacular comedy of street, avenue and U.S. 41. It's a rare joke that is funny. Only situations are funny.

INTERVIEWER

What is Black Humor? Are you a Black Humorist?

ELKIN

I can't even tell you what Black Humor is. Black Humor is a term invented by *Time* magazine. But I'll tell you what kind of humorist I am—and I don't think I am really a humorist. It seems to me that there is only one modern joke: the joke of powerlessness. And Charlie Chaplin me no Charlie Chaplins. The grand joke of modern fiction is the *Lucky Jim* joke of making faces *behind* the professor's back. Now, the grand jokes of *A Bad Man* or *The Dick Gibson Show*—whatever I've written—are the jokes where the character in trouble, confronted with a force much stronger than he is, mumbles *under* his breath something that is absolutely devastating to the authority which threatens him. But the fact that he has to mumble it under his breath, you see, is what makes it funny. Had he shouted it at the aggressor, at the warden, or what-have-you, it wouldn't be funny. I am thinking of a specific line. When Feldman is closeted with the girl, Mona, in the warden's party section of *A Bad Man*, he thinks Mona may be the warden's wife. Oh, God, he thinks, suppose they catch me with the warden's wife. Yet the woman is very attractive to him. She says to Feldman, "One of the things that always bothered me about you stick-up guys and murderers and thugs is the fact that when you're driven up to the police station in a police car, you always hold your hats over your

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faces. Why do you do that?'' And Feldman says, ''Yeah, well, we like the way they smell.'' Feldman is not really answering her question: that is the answer of powerlessness.

INTERVIEWER

Are there any conventions which especially appeal to you and that find their way into your fiction?

ELKIN

No. But I believe in the big things, the traumas that no writer invents that change all pre-existing alternatives for the character. Divorce: a guy goes home and sees his wife packing a suitcase. He says, ''Going on a trip, are you?'' She says, ''Yeah, and I've already burned your suitcases so you ain't coming with me. We are now not going to be married any more.'' This means that the guy has to change his priorities. Or he comes down to the English office and Professor Madsen calls him in and says, ''You were going to teach at one o'clock today? Well, don't bother; you're fired.'' So no matter what this guy's life has been before the world leaned on him, he now has to make adjustments. Now, at the beginning of *A Bad Man* Feldman is arrested for things that happened way before the novel began, so he has to make certain kinds of adjustments. He is going to a place where Feldman cannot be Feldman any more. The same thing is true—more or less—in every book written, not just by me but by anybody.

If these big things that change priorities come too quickly and too often, the book will of necessity be a melodrama, a soap opera. On the other hand, there are things which the writer invents. I am thinking of the bone shop, for example, in Charles Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend,* where one of the characters goes down into this subterranean old dark shop and there are drawers all around the walls of the shop. He finds the knuckle bone of the third finger of the right hand and knee caps and the left ankle bone. Every bone there is catalogued and stored. I am sure that no such shop existed in life, that Dickens invented it. If I were to use it, it would be a

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case of pure plagiarism. That's something that is spontaneously generated by th – ..er. If a book has nothing but those spontaneous generations, the result will not be melodrama but chaos. That's why I criticized Coover before because *Pricksongs and Descants* is nothing but invention piled upon invention with no—I don't like the word—trauma to give the thing stability.

INTERVIEWER

I have some questions now about themes or ideas I find in much of your fiction. You have Dick Gibson say, "The point of life was the possibility it always held out for the exceptional." The heroes in your novels have a tremendous need to be exceptional, to transcend others, to quarrel with the facts of physical existence. Is this a convention—which we've just been talking about—or something very basic to your whole view of life?

ELKIN

It is something very basic to my view of life, but in the case of that character it becomes the initial trauma which sets him going. It becomes his priority. Dick Gibson goes on to say that he had believed that the great life was the life of cliché. When I started to write the book, I did not know that was what the book was going to be about, but indeed that is precisely what the book gets to be about as I learned what Dick Gibson's life meant. Consider the last few pages of the book:

> *What had his own life been, his interminable apprenticeship which he saw now he could never end? And everyone blameless as himself, everyone doing his best but maddened at last, all, all zealous, all with explanations ready at hand and serving an ideal of truth or beauty or health or grace. Everyone—everyone. It did no good to change policy or fiddle with format. The world pressed in. It opened your windows. All one could hope for was to find his scapegoat, . . .*

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Now, everything that follows this is a cliché:

> *to wait for him, lurking in alleys, pressed flat against walls, crouched behind doors while the key jiggles in the lock, taking all the melodramatic postures of revenge. To be there in closets when the enemy comes for his hat, or to surprise him with guns in swivel chairs, your legs dapperly crossed when you turn to face him, to pin him down on hillsides or pounce on him from trees as he rides by, to meet him on the roofs of trains roaring on trestles, or leap at him while he stops at red lights, to struggle with him on the smooth faces of cliffs, . . .*

and so on. The theme of the novel is that the exceptional life—the only great life—is the trite life. It is something that I believe. It is not something that I am willing to risk bodily injury to myself in order to bring to pass, but to have affairs, to go to Europe, to live the dramatic clichés, all the stuff of which movies are made, would be the great life.

INTERVIEWER

But what if one were aware that they were clichés? Isn't that what causes so much despair in contemporary fiction—that characters can't live a life of clichés?

ELKIN

Dick Gibson is aware that they are clichés. What sets him off—what first inspires this notion in him—is his court martial when he appears before the general and says that he's taken a burr out of the general's paw—something that happens in a fairy tale. When Dick realizes what has happened to him, he begins to weep, thinking, oh boy, I've got it made—I'm going to have enemies, I'm going to be lonely, I'm going to suffer. That is the theme of that book.

INTERVIEWER

Do the characters in your novels, then, have rather conven-

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tional notions of what exceptional is?

ELKIN

Yes, I think so.

INTERVIEWER

James Boswell says that there are "only two kinds of intelligence, the obsessive and the perspectual" and goes on to praise the obsessive while living an obsessed life. Could you comment on this interest in obsession?

ELKIN

It's my notion—and I suppose it's a lot of writers' notion—that the thing which energizes fiction is the will. In the conventional fiction of the nineteenth century, it is the will to get out of one class and make it up into another class. We're no longer so interested in that since everybody more or less has the things that he needs. The conventional drive toward money has been replaced. At least it's been replaced in fiction, and what we read about now—and what I write about—are people whose wills have been colored by some perfectly irrational desire. In the case of Boswell, it is the will to live forever. In the case of Dick Gibson, it is the will to live the great life which is the trite life. In the case of "The Bailbondsman," it is to know the answers to questions that no one can know. In the case of Ashenden in "The Making of Ashenden," it is the desire to find an absolutely pure human being—someone as pure as himself. In the case of Feldman, it is to sell the unsalable thing and to make the buyer pay as much for it as possible. Now these are options that define the characters and that the characters choose as options to define their lives. Their obsessions drive them. Feldman has all the money in the world. He doesn't need to make more. My characters—with the exception of Boswell, who marries money—are well off. This liberates them to do the kinds of things which people don't really do in real life but which they do do in fiction—to follow their own, irrational—but *sane*—

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obsessions which, achieved, would satisfy them. Alas, these guys never catch up with their obsessions.

INTERVIEWER

Their obsessions also give you an interesting perspective on the world, don't they?

ELKIN

Yes. I let them stand back and take pot shots at the world and make commentaries on this or that, but I am not so much interested in those pot shots. It's just that I admire their intelligence. I find it impossible to write about dumb people. While they may be misguided in terms of their obsessions, they are not unintelligent and, by permitting them intelligence as I permit them wealth, I have it both ways.

INTERVIEWER

It seems to me that the metaphor of economics is important in your fiction—Boswell's "turnover, turnover, turnover," Feldman's "unsalable thing," the give-and-take on Dick Gibson's programs, the buying of time in "The Bailbondsman." Does this sound reasonable to you?

ELKIN

Yes. A man named Dave Demarest has said that the major fact in my fiction is the transaction. I would agree with him. Feldman someplace says a sale lost is lost forever, irrecoverable. A profit not made is a profit never to be made—and is irrecoverable. My people do buy and sell, if that's the question you were asking. And I myself in my own personal life am not so much a seller as I am a buyer. I love to buy things. I love being in stores. I love things themselves. I love having money to spend and buying things which are not perhaps the most utilitarian things in the world and may even be vulgar. Department stores, not museums, are the first place I go to in a new city, and I love the position of purchase. My characters tend to be salesmen although, as I talk to you like this, it

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occurs to me that perhaps I should write a novel about a purchaser instead of a seller.

INTERVIEWER

Would you comment on the germination of *Boswell*?

ELKIN

A man named Phil London used to teach here at Washington University. Phil was at my house one evening and was telling me how Boswell got to meet Voltaire. He had sent Voltaire letter upon letter, and Voltaire ignored them. Boswell was having none of this, so he travels to Ferney, and he knocks on the door and tells the servant, "My name is James Boswell and as I happen to be in the neighborhood and have been writing your master, I am here to meet him." The servant goes upstairs and tells Voltaire that this nut is at the door, and Voltaire, who had been beseiged by all these letters, none of which he had answered, comes down and gives an audience to Boswell. Boswell says, "Hi, Voltaire!" Now, London did not tell the anecdote as I told it to you, but that's in effect what happened. It struck me as being so funny that I thought a modern Boswell, on the make for all the great men of his time, might be the source of an amusing novel.

INTERVIEWER

Why did you decide to make mortality the driving fact of his life?

ELKIN

That's the driving fact of my own life. There isn't a day that goes by that I don't think, "Jesus Christ, how many more months do I have left?" or years, I hope. I am totally preoccupied with death. I mean my own death. Barth, for example, has said that he comes from very good stock and expects to live a long time. Bill Gass thinks that one of the reasons he takes so much time writing his novels—it took him

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ten years to write *Omensetter's Luck*—is that he has an infinite amount of time left to him. I don't believe that I have an infinite amount of time left to me. Probably I would be a healthier man if I did believe it.

INTERVIEWER

Is this a matter of concern to you as a writer, as it was to Faulkner: that idea of making a scratch on a stone?

ELKIN

I know what you're talking about. No, I don't think I am making scratches on stones by writing. Whatever happens to me in my career I hope happens before I die. And screw the libraries.

INTERVIEWER

Would you comment on your attitude toward Boswell and especially toward his way of dealing with his own death—hero-worship?

ELKIN

He doesn't give a damn for the great. He cares only that the great give a damn for him. He has a good deal of trouble trying to determine just who it is he actually knows. I once met Faulkner at the University of Virginia and shook his hand, but I don't know Faulkner. Boswell determines the only way you can know a person is if the person has said your name, and that's the solution that he finally zeroes in on. If someone has said his name, Boswell knows him. Now that means that Boswell is not interested in other men's greatness. He is interested in his own. The idea is to get as many great men to say James Boswell, James Boswell, James Boswell, as possible.

INTERVIEWER

Very near the end of the novel Boswell starts thinking about enclosing all other people; he wants to internalize them . . .

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ELKIN

That's in the penultimate chapter of the novel. The death of everybody else in the world is what validates Boswell's life. He grows immense, becomes the ultimate body-builder, by destroying other bodies. Boswell is no sycophant; Boswell is a total egocentric.

I like him because he has the energy of ego. I think his is a jerky way of living one's life, but I think a novelist has to like his characters. If you establish a distance between yourself and your character, then that distance is magnified once it gets around to the reader and the reader is, in effect, looking at a character across the Grand Canyon and can't possibly care for him. So, all characters, all protagonists, are ultimately sympathetic. If they aren't the novel fails, becomes silly. This is precisely the failure of Alison Lurie's *The War Between the Tates*. Miss Lurie clearly despises her characters.

Boswell is a perpetual outsider, and the only thing that gives any vitality to his life is trying to get inside those doors and up those god-damn stairs. At the end of the novel, he could have knocked down that barrier, could have produced credentials that would demonstrate that he's Boswell, could have gotten into The Club. But once he's done that, then, by God, he has to die because he's got nothing left to do. Since the thing that keeps him alive is running scared, he has to start all over again. So "Down with The Club."

INTERVIEWER

Would you comment on the Johnson-Boswell parallels?

ELKIN

I actually did read all the Boswell journals that were available at the time. I found that there was a kind of serendipity because I was reading the journals after I had already conceived of and begun to write the novel. I found that he had an illegitimate child, as does my Boswell, and that he was married to somebody named Margaret. I had already named my Boswell's wife Margaret when I discovered that the original

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Boswell's wife's name was Margaret. I also made him come from Saint Louis because Boswell came from Edinburgh and it seems to me that Saint Louis is to America what Edinburgh is to Great Britain.

INTERVIEWER

Would you tell us how *A Bad Man* began?

ELKIN

Again, with a friend. Al Lebowitz was telling me about a lawyer here in Saint Louis who had been caught out in some shady deal and had been sentenced to a year in jail. It struck me—what must it be like for a man of the upper-middle class to have to spend a year with pickpockets? The mixture of classes is a very attractive theme. There is a basic fascination in the situation—what it must be for a man who never split a Republican ticket in his life, as Feldman says, to be thrust into a jail with low lifes. But that itself would not make a novel, so I upped the ante philosophically and asked what would it be like for a man to be sentenced for his character? To do time for his character? You see, Feldman is perfectly innocent of the charge that actually gets him into jail. It was a machine error—an error in the IBM accounting system. They don't put him in jail for doing those favors. They put him in jail for something that, in fact, he is innocent of. And the real thing he is in jail for is his character, as the warden knows. Yet Feldman is not the bad man in that novel. The bad man is the warden. Feldman ain't exactly a sweetie-pie, he is capable of all kinds of cruelty in the name of energy. But as far as I am concerned, the *real* son-of-a-bitch in the book is Warden Fisher.

INTERVIEWER

What about the setting? It's no real prison.

ELKIN

No, it's no real prison. As one character says, "It's a whole

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country of penitentiary we got up here.'' After I was about 150 pages or so into the novel, I tried to get into a prison to see what a prison was like. That's very hard to do, unless you commit a crime. I wanted to see how far off I was, so I went through the Walpole State Penitentiary in Massachusetts, and it was one of the most boring afternoons I have ever spent in my life. I am surprised that men can come out and still be sane creatures because they have absolutely nothing to do. I was in one room, for example, where the prisoners were all assigned to bristle brushes. That would be perfectly terrific if it weren't for the fact that they had a brush-bristling machine in the room that could bristle a hundred brushes a minute. They had these ninety prisoners and just this one machine, so eighty-eight of the prisoners are sitting around the walls of the room and just two prisoners get to work the machine for an hour, and then the others get to work the machine. They aren't allowed to talk to each other. Though I was very bored with that prison experience, I went back thrilled with the notion that my prison was so much better than their prison. If I were a penologist, I would make the prisons more like mine because at least the prisoners wouldn't get bored.

I was aware of the Kafkaesque tone of some of this stuff, and I wanted to short-circuit that by suggesting that Feldman was aware of it, too. That's called cheating. I tell myself this for my own good.

INTERVIEWER

Did you do research for *The Dick Gibson Show*, or have you been a long-time radio . . .

ELKIN

I'm a radio listener. I have more radios in my house than you could imagine. And I was just saying to Joan yesterday, ''By God, Joan, there's a new radio out. We've got to get it. It gets nothing but television stations.'' You weren't upstairs when you were at the house yesterday, but I have every con-

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ceivable kind of radio, and I *listen.* I really listen to the radio.

INTERVIEWER

In *The Dick Gibson Show* did you set out to qualify the romantic heroes in *Boswell* and *A Bad Man*?

ELKIN

No, but in fact that's what happens. Dick can't stand anybody's obsession but his own, which is largely the plight of myself and yourself, probably, and everybody. He's opened a Pandora's box when he opens his microphones to the people out there. When they find the platform that the Gibson format provides, they just get nuttier and nuttier and wilder and wilder, and this genuinely arouses whatever minimal social consciousness Dick Gibson has. The paradox of the novel is that the enemy that Gibson had been looking for all his life is that audience. The audience is the enemy. Dick builds up in his mind this Behr-Bleibtreau character. That Behr-Bleibtreau is his enemy. That's baloney paranoia. The enemy is the amorphous public that he is trying to appeal to, that he's trying to make love to with his voice. Dick Gibson is a bodiless being. He is his voice. That's why the major scene in the novel is the struggle for Gibson's voice.

INTERVIEWER

Who is Behr-Bleibtreau? There is a suggestiveness to his name that I can't articulate.

ELKIN

Neither can I. I used to know a guy named____Bleibtreau. Hyphenating the name made it more sinister than just Bleibtreau itself. You know, you could almost put Count in front of it.

INTERVIEWER

Is that why Dick thinks that Behr-Bleibtreau is the enemy—because there is this suggestion of cliché?

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ELKIN

That's right. Behr-Bleibtreau is a charlatan—that's what he is. He has this theory of the will that is alluded to in the second section of the novel. And he is a hypnotist, exactly the kind of guy who Gibson sees as out to get him. Of course Behr-Bleibtreau isn't out to get him. When Gibson thinks it is Behr-Bleibtreau calling him from Cincinnati, it isn't. It's just Gibson's own paranoia that creates the conditions for Behr-Bleibtreauism.

INTERVIEWER

Is radio in the novel an index to social change, perhaps the devaluation of language?

ELKIN

That was not my intention. I could make a case that once upon a time there were scripts, a platform and an audience out in front of Jack Benny and Mary Livingston, that radio then was a kind of art form and now it is an artless form in which you get self-promoters and people with theories about curing cancer by swallowing mosquitoes or something. Language, since it is occurring spontaneously rather than thought out, is devalued. But actually, in real life, modern radio talk shows are much more interesting than *The Jack Benny Show* ever was because you are getting the shop talk of personality.

INTERVIEWER

Dick is a professional word man, and by the end he is reduced nearly to silence. Is this your "literature of exhaustion" that Barth talks about, a comment on the futility of language . . . .

ELKIN

No. Certainly not.

INTERVIEWER

He does say less and less as the novel moves along.

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ELKIN

Right. And the other people say more and more. That is intentional. But Dick makes an effort to get his program back from the sufferers. He starts hanging up on people. Then he gets the biggest charlatan—Nixon—at the end. Wasn't I clever to invent Nixon before Nixon did?

INTERVIEWER

In bringing together so many stories and storytellers, did you have a thematic unity in mind?

ELKIN

I had in mind, as a matter of fact, *The Canterbury Tales*, particularly in that second section where the journey to dawn is the journey to Canterbury. Although there are no particular parallels, when I was sending out sections of the novel to magazines, I would call the sections "The Druggist's Tale" and so on. There is that choral effect of the pilgrims to Canterbury.

INTERVIEWER

Do you still write short stories, or do you feel your gifts are best suited to the expansiveness of the novel?

ELKIN

The last story I wrote—probably the best story I ever wrote, "A Poetics for Bullies"—was written for *The Saturday Evening Post* in 1964 (although the *Post* rejected it and *Esquire* picked it up). They wanted to do a children's issue, and they asked me to write a story about kids. Joan had made a bow and arrow for my son Philip. A kid who lived behind us said to Philip, "I can do magic; I will give you two arrows where there are one." The kid then broke the arrow, and that gave me the initial idea to do a story about bullies. Actually, it is a companion piece to "On a Field, Rampant," the first story I wrote which I felt was any good. The character in the earlier story is unnamed but thinks he is a king, and he really

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is the John Williams of the bully story.

INTERVIEWER

Are the stories in *Criers and Kibitzers* collected consciously as studies in heroism?

ELKIN

No. Collected consciously as studies of complaint and *utzing*, a Yiddish word for trouble making, getting people to do things they don't want to do. There are two kinds of people, according to the title: the troublemakers and the troubled.

INTERVIEWER

"The Bailbondsman" is my favorite in *Searches and Seizures*. Alexander Main seems to me to be *the* representative Elkin man.

ELKIN

I would agree with that—because he gets the best of other people. And he is a great salesman. He talks people into taking bond, or he decides not to give them bond, purely on whim. He is truly a master not only of himself but of absolutely everyone else who comes in contact with him. He is a scholar, and he is a rat bastard. But I admire him for his rhetoric. I, myself, am closer to Main than any other character.

INTERVIEWER

Could you comment on the immense power of your protagonists within their novels? Does it reflect the novelist's power over his characters?

EKLIN

I don't think it has anything to do with the novelist's power over his characters, but it is clearly a pattern in my fiction. To have each protagonist his own novelist—if that's what you mean—yes. Each protagonist moves the other characters around as though they were pawns, or tries to.

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INTERVIEWER

Do you read academic criticism on your fiction?

ELKIN

On mine, yes. But I don't read it on anybody else. If you write an article about me, believe me, I'll read it because I am profoundly interested in myself.

INTERVIEWER

If you were going to write an essay on your own work . . .

ELKIN

I did. I did write an essay on my own work when I wrote the introduction to *Stories from the Sixties.* That contained most of what I think about writing.

INTERVIEWER

If you were going to write this essay in a somewhat less indirect form than that introduction, what would you talk about?

ELKIN

I couldn't do it . . . I suppose it would be a retaliatory essay. Some reviewers, particularly Christopher Lehmann-Haupt, are hung up on this notion that I do routines, that I do schtick. I do not do schtick. What I do are organized routines and connected schtick—schtick upon schtick upon schtick until we have a piece of carpentry. I am not a stand-up comedian, and what I would try to do in such an essay would be to demonstrate the form that exists in the novels. Reviewers write about the hilarious passages—who gives a shit about the hilarious passages? Hilarious passages are easy to write. There are passages that aren't so hilarious that I like much more. And metaphor: Feldman is talking about a girl lifeguard in a white bathing suit, and he says that he sees "the dark vertical of her behind like the jumbo vein in shrimp."

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INTERVIEWER

What kind of a mind does a writer have that "the jumbo vein in shrimp" is present and available for him to get down on the page?

ELKIN

I don't have it here in my office now, but if we were over in my carrel, where I do my writing, you would see a J.C. Penney catalogue, an enormous 1974 J.C. Penney catalogue and its big supplement. Now this guy in the new novel, *The Franchiser,* has a Radio Shack franchise. He is describing what these radios, phonographs, and stereos look like. A speaker is black as a domino, some damn thing like that. Of course I invent that, but I invent that by *studying* the photographs of those speakers. I try literally to look at what I am writing about. In "The Bailbondsman," I didn't make up a single thing in the descriptions of teeth. All those teeth are right there to be seen in the Victoria and Albert Museum of Natural History. I went with a pad and pencil and copied down the shapes of those teeth. I'm not a very good artist, but I could get the rough structure and by God there was a tooth with three holes that looked exactly like a goblin's face. It would look like a goblin's face to you. There was another thing that looked like a piece of cork. That's the *only* thing it looked like. So it's not a question of making imaginary leaps or having a third eye. It's a question of using the two eyes I have—and looking hard and close at things.

INTERVIEWER

Is that what you try to teach your writing students?

ELKIN

Yes. That kind of observation can be taught. I also try to teach them how to recognize a situation, what legitimately is a situation and what isn't. Those are the only things that can be taught. I can't teach a person style. I can't teach him to write, in terms of language. But I can teach them that things look like other things.

—THOMAS LECLAIR

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Tour of the World

Jean Le Gac

"Tour of the World" and "The Excursion" are both photographic serials by Jean Le Gac, a Parisian conceptual artist in his early forties. In each, apparent vacation snapshots are arranged in order and supplemented with texts, the combination creating novelettes "on location." In "Tour of the World" a day-trip around Paris is accompanied by sardonic, oddly self-indulgent descriptions of places visited. In "The Excursion" an unrelated group of locales become the stopping points on a world tour illuminated by wry and ironic scrapbook captions. Le Gac is an artist whose narrative power adds an important dimension to his artistic choices.

—A.A.

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(The Main Greenhouse in the "Jardin des Plantes" in Paris)

The virgin forest was closed to the public while the glass roof was being repaired.

Fortunately older art students, scattered behind palm trees, were painting from life, and watercolor and tropical humidity seemed to agree, and Mr. S . . . let us in.

We went through the narrow tunnel in the mountain and came out behind the glass door which gives access to the desert climate of the Mexican border.

--Let's make sure we look good on the photo . . . rather like notorious refugees whom political friends have put up in their hacienda.

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(In Montsouris Park in Paris)

--L'Arabie, c'est ou dites?
--Par là, mec! (*)

We got off at the nearest tube station with this bad pun in mind. We could also have remembered a sentence once written on the back of a postcard, sent from Baghdad, by a rich and famous globetrotter who was exploring those regions: ". . . then I went to Damas where they have such delicious marshmallow ice cream."

Though the palace was built inside the park, a good way off the boulevard Jourdan, it has a number plate, 25, and a "Service des Eaux" plate.

--Let's make sure we look good on the photo . . . rather like the energetic technical advisor, methodically working in cold blood for a foreign power.

(*) Translator's Note: Play on words, untranslatable into English. When considered phonetically, the first sentence, which means "Where is Arabia?" can also mean "Saudi Arabia" itself (Arabie Saoudite) and the second sentence which means "This way, chum!" can also mean "Via Mecca" (Par La Mecque).

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(The Statue of Liberty Enlightening the World on the Pont de Grenelle in Paris)

Up river we stopped at the Museum on our way to lunch at the Russian canteen.

During the meal we didn't see again the elderly White Russian who collected statuettes of elephants and who, last time, had made us draw some on torn bits of visiting cards while advising us in a ribald tone to represent them with their trunk up.

Then we walked to the extremity of the Pont de Grenelle.

--Let's make sure we really look good on the photo . . . rather like a celebrated author, invited to the United States to give a series of lectures.

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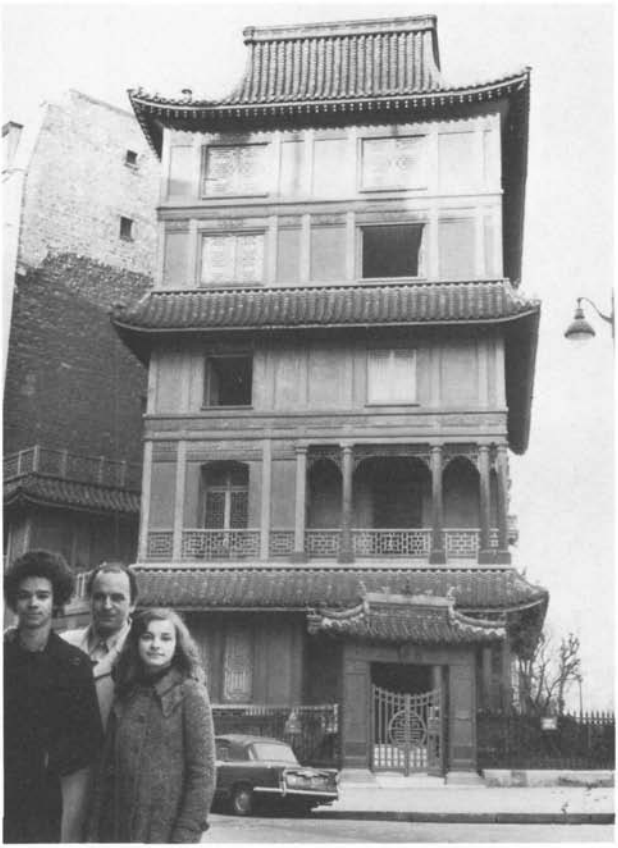

(100 C.T. et Cie "Arts d'Asie," 48 rue de Courcelles in Paris)

According to us this antique shop is situated more to the west, at the other end of town.

So as not to waste the afternoon uselessly going from here to there we decided that on the way back we would go and watch the six o'clock movie in one of the theatres along the boulevards near the Opera.

We couldn't make it because of the enormous crowd of people queueing up to see the film of the moment: for local color let's mention "Chinatown."

--Let's make sure we look good on the photo . . . rather like the French intellectual on a research tour in Peking or, more bourgeois, on account of the grown-up children with us, like the distinguished ornithologist who has been granted, by the Fondation de France, a scholarship to study endangered species.

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John O'Neill versus the Crown

Bart Midwood

A pockmarked redheaded man with a leather case in hand hurried along Endell Street, humming.

Endell Street used to be the Tin Pan Alley of London. It is short, drab and quiet. The trade has drifted away and expanded into a corporate universe. A few small music publishers remain, and one private recording studio.

Two men emerged laughing from the studio, John O'Neill and an American musician from New York named Shirman. Both winced at the daylight, though the sky was gray.

The pockmarked redheaded man passed in front of them and stopped humming.

O'Neill took a toothpick from his mouth and described a little circle in the air. "Hello, Harold," he said.

Harold shifted his eyes and quickened his pace.

O'Neill turned to the American. "He's a clarinetist, Harold is. I gave him his first job in London five years ago. Now he won't even say hello on the street."

"Did you have a fight?" said Shirman.

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"Fight? No. That's just the way of them over here. He don't mean any harm. The English are an inscrutable lot."

"I know," said Shirman. "I've been in London two years and haven't made a friend yet." He watched Harold turn the corner and disappear.

"Lad, let me tell you something," said O'Neill, placing the toothpick between his teeth. "It takes twenty years to get to know an Englishman and when you finally get to know him, you find out there's nothing to know."

Shirman laughed. "How long have you lived here?"

"Twenty-five years last March. I visit Dublin once every few years just to remind myself that I don't smell so bad as the English want me to believe."

"How come you stay?"

"The money, lad. Better chance for work. But exile's a penance, no question about it. Take yesterday. Yesterday I walk into the pub and the first thing that's said to me is, 'Two English soldiers were killed last night in Belfast'. And the fellow looks at me like I did these killings personally, you see? So I say to him, 'Listen, Garvey, I paid my taxes in this country for twenty-five years'. Well, he just turns his back and won't give me the pleasure of an answer. Garvey's a trumpet player. We used to work together. They give me a laugh, the English."

Suddenly O'Neill paled with terror. He touched Shirman's arm.

"What's wrong?" said Shirman.

"Don't turn around. Just follow me." O'Neill flung his toothpick into the gutter and hurried down the street.

Shirman followed in bewilderment.

At the corner O'Neill took Shirman's elbow, pointed at a shop across the road and said, "Let's have a coffee in that place." Then he broke into a run, dodging traffic adeptly.

Shirman waited for the light to change. He found his friend seated in the rear of the shop, in a corner, holding a cup of coffee with two hands, the collar of his coat turned up.

"What was that about?" said Shirman.

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O'Neill glanced furtively around the shop. "I'll tell you, but keep your voice down."

"Are you in trouble?"

"You might say that."

The front door opened and again O'Neill paled.

Shirman began to turn to see who had entered.

"Don't turn," said O'Neill sternly.

"What's going on?"

"It's them again."

"The same person you saw on Endell Street?"

"No, a different one. But they're in it together."

"In what?"

"He doesn't see me yet. I'm going out the back way through the kitchen. Meet me in twenty minutes inside the coffee shop in Fortnum and Mason's.

"Are you kidding? That place is mainly for ladies in hats and Oscar Wilde types."

"That's why it's safe. Nobody would think to look for me there." O'Neill leaned forward, smiled satirically and added, "So long, Yank." Then he hid his face behind his coat collar, stood up, slowly made his way to the kitchen door and slipped out.

Shirman sipped his coffee and brooded. He had met O'Neill only an hour ago. They had collaborated in recording a tape of three original songs by Shirman. The recording date had been scheduled well in advance but at the last minute Shirman's regular bass player took ill and the sound engineer telephoned O'Neill as a replacement. O'Neill was a first-rate bassist. He was paid five pounds by Shirman.

Shirman had been unemployed for three months. Unless he found work or sold at least one of the three songs in the next two weeks he intended to return to New York. His wife, however, was English and the move would be sacrificial. She was close to her family and friends in London, and besides, the manners and sensibility of Americans—the naiveté, the directness, the generosity, the eagerness to please—baffled and offended her. In fact, Shirman himself was not un-

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American in these particulars and she had recently taken up an attitude of polite indifference toward him. The chance meeting with O'Neill was a welcome diversion. O'Neill was openhearted, problematic, a decent musician, and he hated the English.

Shirman took a cab to Fortnum and Mason's. It was just after noon and the coffee shop was busy. There were perhaps half a dozen ladies with hats but only one "Oscar Wilde type." The other patrons were diverse—a family with two small children, a group of three bearded men wearing shabby dark suits and no ties, a young dreamy woman with long brown hair sitting alone, and an obese man about fifty sitting with a pretty blond adolescent girl who wore a hearing-aid. All the same, thought Shirman, the place has an Edwardian odor and the waitresses appear to be imitating the manners of the nobility. He sat at a round white table and ordered a tuna fish sandwich and a cup of tea. Five minutes later O'Neill appeared.

He paused in the doorway surveying the room suspiciously, and then walked briskly to Shirman's table and sat down. He kept his coat on. He put his elbows on the table and leaned forward. "We can talk here."

"Are you hungry?" said Shirman, attempting to lighten the tone. "I'll treat."

"I'll have a sandwich."

The waitress arrived. She inspected O'Neill conspicuously, as if questioning his right to exist. O'Neill looked up at her out of the corner of his eye and then winked at Shirman.

"Yes, sir?" she said.

"I'll have one of your dainty tuna fish canapes, if you please, and a cup of tea," said O'Neill.

The waitress walked away.

"What's going on?" said Shirman.

"The wife, lad. That's the long and short of it." O'Neill leaned back in his chair and surveyed the coffee shop. "Look at them," he said with disgust.

"Look at who?"

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"What do you make of them?"

"O'Neill, I'm exasperated. Talk straight or I'm leaving."

"Leave then! You won't have been the first to walk away from John O'Neill and I hope to Jesus you won't be the last!"

The waitress rushed to the table. "I'll ask you please to keep your voice down, sir. There are people in the restaurant beside yourself."

"People is a loose term," said O'Neill. "Something resembling people is more to the point."

"Sir?"

"All the same, I'll do what I can to oblige."

The waitress walked away.

Shirman glanced across the room at the dreamy young girl and caught her eye. She smiled faintly and then turned away.

"What are you looking at?" said O'Neill.

"That girl. She's beautiful."

"I thought you were married."

"I am, but I'm not blind as well."

"I am, I'm blind," said O'Neill gravely. "My wife walks in the room and I tremble."

Shirman laughed. "With fear?"

"No. With desire." O'Neill was fierce and serious. Clearly he disapproved of the laughter. "That's why we keep our distance in company. As soon as I touch her, I can't restrain myself."

"How long have you been married?"

"Nineteen years."

"And you still feel that way?"

"It's been the death of me."

"It doesn't sound like death."

O'Neill scowled. "You don't understand a thing."

At that point an extravagant group of people entered the coffee shop. There were six men and a woman. All eyes were drawn to them, as to a film screen in a dark theater. These people looked in fact as if they belonged in a film, a thrilling black and white adventure about war and desperate espionage.

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Four of the men were dressed in gray hats and dark trenchcoats with the collars turned up. The other two were hatless; one was blond and wore a blue turtleneck sweater and jeans and the other was bald and muscular and wore a short leather jacket with the top three buttons undone to reveal a thick crop of red hair on the chest. The woman was about forty years old. She was short and had dark blond hair. Her breasts were large and pretty. Her mouth was small and her eyes blue and energetic, with a power that could be felt at distances up to a hundred yards in average weather and up to two hundred on a clear day. She wore a beige dress under a suede coat.

She walked at once to a table in the rear, the men following at her heels. Her hips did not sway; she walked stiffly, like a man or a ballerina. She remained standing until the six men were seated and then she sat and a lively animated discussion began.

There was much laughter and all seven constantly interrupted one another. This continued until a serious look crossed the woman's face. She appeared to be staring in the direction of Shirman and O'Neill. The six men quieted and she leaned toward the bald muscular man and whispered. He nodded, rose from his chair and walked across the coffee shop. He walked up to O'Neill and put his hands on the table.

"Your wife wants to know what the bloody hell you're doing here," he said.

"If she wants to know, I'll be glad to tell her," said O'Neill. Then he turned to Shirman. "She's a great one for knowledge, the wife. Insatiable. Wants to know everything." Then he turned back to the baldheaded man. "Won't you join us for a cup of tea?"

"You mean that's your wife?" said Shirman in amazement.

O'Neill smiled out of one side of his mouth. "That's the little woman, lad."

"Did you know she'd be here?"

"They lunch here every Tuesday at the same hour."

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"That can be altered, O'Neill," said the baldheaded man. Then he turned on his heels and rejoined his companions.

O'Neill frowned. He clenched his fist tightly around a salt shaker from the table and shut his eyes. "I could kill them," he said.

He rose from the table, slipped the salt shaker in his coat pocket and, without another word, walked out of the shop.

The waitress arrived with O'Neill's tea and sandwich. "Will your friend be returning?" she said.

"I don't know."

"The food will have to be paid for."

"That's all right. Put it on the table."

The waitress sighed a note of annoyance. As she placed the tea and sandwich on the table, Shirman had a flash of anxiety, fearing that she might inflict an inappropriate punishment on him if she noticed that the salt shaker were missing. The theft escaped her, however, and she walked away, her hips rocking with anger.

The baldheaded man returned. He placed a folded piece of note paper on the table.

"Mrs. O'Neill wants you to read this," he said.

He sucked his teeth significantly and left.

Shirman read the note at once.

> Dear Sir:
>
> Please come to 27 Allen Street, Kensington, tonight at 7:30. Urgent.
>
> Alice O'Neill
>
> p.s. If you intend to be there, please nod yes to me across the restaurant.

Shirman looked up. She was staring at him. Without thinking he nodded. Her eyes brightened wonderfully and she smiled. The short dark man in the trench coat who sat at her left winked at Shirman and raised one thumb in the air, indicating his approval.

Shirman smiled nervously in return, paid the bill and hurriedly departed.

At home, he found another note, this one from his wife.

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Dear Sam,

Having dinner at home. Back at about ten or eleven. Cold ham in fridge. Good film down the street if you're too bored. Saw it this afternoon with Colin. Laughed myself sick.

love,
Clara

Home to Clara meant her parents' place. Shirman was unwelcome there. Colin was a man Clara had been engaged to marry before she married Shirman.

It was nearly 4 p.m. Shirman sat at the piano and played for an hour. He played Chopin—two preludes, two nocturnes, a waltz, and a mazurka—composed a bawdy song titled *The Apples in My Trousers,* and did five minutes of finger exercises. At five o'clock he rose from the piano bench and experienced a wave of disgust. He went into the bathroom and attempted to throw up but was unsuccessful. He looked in the mirror and smirked. Suddenly he felt a need to be impertinent. He went into the bedroom and changed his clothes. He put on a wrinkled blue work shirt, a dungaree jacket and trousers and a pair of stained and torn tennis sneakers. Then he went outside and took a taxi to the O'Neills'. It was only five-thirty and he estimated he would arrive about an hour-and-a-half early.

He was greeted at the door by a Chinaman in an immaculate white kitchen jacket who looked at his wristwatch ceremoniously and declared by way of a greeting that Shirman was an hour-and-a-half early.

"Is Mrs. O'Neill at home?" said Shirman.

"She and Mr. O'Neill are in the tree," said the Chinaman.

"Where?" said Shirman.

"The tree."

"Ah, the tree. Which tree?"

"Come back later."

"Who is it, Li?" called a voice from within the house. It was a big ugly voice that sounded like the baldheaded man.

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"Mr. Shirman who is expected at seven-thirty," said Li over his shoulder.

The baldheaded man appeared behind Li. "Come in, Shirman," he said. "Mrs. O'Neill is in the tree with her husband but she'll be down shortly."

At first Shirman had thought that "tree" was a Chinese mispronunciation of something and he had laughed to himself but now the pronunciation had been confirmed by the baldheaded man who was English and Shirman was perturbed.

He was escorted to a large drawing room where he found the rest of Mrs. O'Neill's entourage—the four men in trench coats and the blond man in the turtleneck sweater. They were seated in soft leather chairs before a large window overlooking the back yard. None of them acknowledged Shirman's existence.

"Sit down," said the baldheaded man. "Mrs. O'Neill will be glad you've arrived early."

"Oh?" said Shirman.

"Yes, I think she'll appreciate that. I'll bring you a cup of tea. Or would you prefer coffee?"

"Tea."

The baldheaded man left the room.

Shirman sat in a soft leather chair. Out the window he saw a tree circled by a white picket fence. Built across the lower branches was a little house. One wall, the wall facing the main house, was made of glass. Mr. and Mrs. O'Neill lay naked on a bed inside. Their limbs were supple and smooth and their movements reminded Shirman of a sentimental ballet. Mrs. O'Neill was pale and translucent; her husband was darker and had a hairy chest and back. She lay on her side, kissing the inside of his thigh and stroking his back tenderly with one hand. He was kneeling on one knee, kissing the calves of her legs. Slowly he turned and she let herself roll onto her back. He fit his legs between hers and propped himself up by stiffening his arms so that his back was arched. They looked at one another with longing and her tongue slid

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back and forth across her upper lip, the sight of which moved him to close his eyes in a swoon. Then he kissed her eyes and entered her slowly and she trembled for a moment, after which he too trembled as if she likewise had entered him. Their hips moved toward and away from each other subtly. There were tears in their eyes and they began to speak. In the end, they trembled, just as they had in the beginning, but with greater force, and fell asleep.

The baldheaded man strode into the room and drew the curtain across the window. He placed a cup of tea beside Shirman on a table and left the room. The other men followed, whispering and laughing and casting sidelong glances at Shirman.

Rain began to fall. It fell heavily. There was a knock at the window. Shirman crossed the room and drew the curtain. O'Neill stood naked at the window, a wild look in his eyes, his hair matted on his forehead. He began to talk at the window with his hands, deftly, excitedly, in the language of the deaf and dumb. Shirman had once read a book on the subject and recognized some of the signs as authentic but he was ignorant of their meaning. A small boy in a yellow plastic raincoat and rainhat stood beside O'Neill; he had an angelic face and a sombre expression in his eyes. Alice O'Neill stood barefoot on the bed, buttoning the front of her dress. A girl in a bathing suit ran round and round through the grass, chasing a sheepdog. She was lithe and merry, no more than five years old. O'Neill lifted the boy in his arms and pointed at him and then at himself. He formed the word "mine" with his lips. Then he pointed to his right ear and shook his head from side to side. Shirman took this to mean that the boy was deaf. O'Neill's eyes filled with tears. He set the boy on his feet and sobbed convulsively. The four men in trench coats appeared. Each carried a white umbrella. They surrounded O'Neill and led him to the tree. Alice O'Neill stood at the foot of the tree. She too carried a white umbrella. She kissed the forehead of her husband and walked toward the main house. Shirman caught her eye and she smiled. O'Neill

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climbed the ladder to the tree-house. The four men in trench coats gathered the children.

Someone touched Shirman's arm. He was taken aback for he thought that he had been alone in the room. However, beside him stood John O'Neill dressed in a smart tweed suit and a white shirt open at the collar. He was dry and neatly combed.

"I just saw you climb into the tree-house," said Shirman.

"Good," said O'Neill. "And did you see the lad in the yellow raincoat, and the four chaps in trench coats with the white umbrellas?"

"Yes."

"Then I guess you have twenty-twenty vision."

"Who are you, O'Neill?" said Shirman.

"Who am I? I'm the Rabbi of Bachrath."

"Who?"

"I'm Lazarus. I'm a crazy person."

"I'm going to the movies," said Shirman.

"The movies is a good thing if you don't weaken," said O'Neill.

Shirman looked out the window. "Where's the tree-house?"

"It's an empty tree," said O'Neill.

"Where's Alice?"

"In Wonderland with the Queen of Hearts. I'm the Mad Hatter."

"I thought you were the Rabbi of Bachrath."

"I used to be. Then I got smart. I went to England and dug a tunnel to Wonderland and set myself up in hats. The principal thing is you've got to establish yourself. It don't make any difference what. Hats, shoes, hot dogs, anything."

"Who's the Rabbi of Bachrath?"

"He was a rabbi who lived in the eighteenth century in Poland. One night at a Passover seder he saw a dead child under the table and he said to himself, 'This place is gonna be crapped on'. So he grabbed his wife and he got out."

"If you're the Rabbi of Bachrath, how come you call your-

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self 'he'?''

''I'm one of the paranoid schizophrenics. We're into the third person very heavily.''

''What happened to your Irish accent?''

''I lived in Brooklyn for a while. I used to play for the Dodgers. I'm Gene Hermansky.''

''Who's Gene Hermansky?''

''Left fielder. Before that I was Duke Snider. I used to be Eddie Stanky but he was too short and they used to call him Stinky. Names are important.''

''How did you get dressed so fast?''

''I used to be a quick-change artist.''

''What happned to the tree-house?''

''It folds up.''

''That's true. It folds up.'' This was said by Alice O'Neill. She stood in the doorway and smiled.

Shirman turned and looked at her. She was smartly dressed.

''However, not everything he says is true,'' she continued. ''In John's case, you see, it's usually the most extraordinary statements that are true. His lies generally have a quite banal aspect—which of course partly accounts for their success. A clever man, my husband, but quite mad.''

''Get the children,'' said O'Neill.

''Silas is putting them to bed,'' said Alice.

''I want to show them off,'' said O'Neill.

''I saw them,'' said Shirman.

''But they didn't see you. That's important.''

''Are they really deaf?'' said Shirman.

''Yes,'' said Alice.

''In England you're better off deaf,'' said O'Neill.

''If you were deaf, you couldn't be a musician,'' said Shirman.

''If I were deaf I could live in England and smile. Beethoven was deaf. I used to be Beethoven. Then I got heartburn. So I became Mozart and died young.''

Shirman looked at Alice. ''I can't talk to him.''

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"He likes you," she said.

"You're speaking as if I weren't in the room," said O'Neill.

The baldheaded man cleared his throat in the doorway. "We're ready to go," he said.

"In a minute, Silas," said Alice.

"They're ready to go," said O'Neill.

Alice turned to Shirman. "I want you to keep him company tonight."

"Me?" said Shirman.

"Someone has to keep an eye on him," she said. "He threatened to throw a bomb at the television studio tonight. It's an old threat but we always take precautions. John's been excluded from my social life for a long time because he hates my friends and he doesn't fit in. And as his own social life is rather dreary by comparison, he gets angry. But there's nothing to be done, you see?"

"Why don't you separate?" said Shirman.

"I love his legs."

"That's not much."

"Vitamin C isn't much either, but you can't live without it."

"I'm a vitamin," said O'Neill. "I used to be a mineral. I used to be the Rabbi of Bachrath and Lazarus. I used to be Irish. Now I live in a tree and talk to deaf children."

"He owns the tree," said Alice. "He bought it from me. He refuses to live in this house because it was a Christmas present from my father who has a title and money. John is proud. He said he'd stay with me only on condition that we'd make love in the sight of my friends every night, so that they'd see that he had his place and that he was worth something. I agreed and I'm glad. I don't have to pay attention to him the rest of the day and I'm quite satisfied."

"It's driven him crazy, this arrangement," said Shirman.

"That's the price," she said. "His madness, however, has taken interesting forms and has led him to cultivate a variety of bizarre talents that might otherwise have lain dormant—quick-change artist, juggler, mimic, scholar of ridiculous

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arcana such as American baseball and Jewish literature, string bass player, oboist, composer of filthy songs, social polemicist, magician, carpenter of disappearing houses, and poet. Unlike most Irishmen of his class, he doesn't drink."

"Where are you going tonight?" said Shirman.

"I make films, documentaries," she said. "The men you saw me with are my film crew. We've made a film on conditions in Northern Ireland. It's a film in support of the working classes. It will be premiered at eight-thirty tonight on BBC 2 and there's a party afterward and so on. I'm a socialist."

"I'm a reactionary," said O'Neill. "I want everybody to go back to the trees."

"Are there really people following him?" said Shirman.

"Sometimes," she said. "Today, for example, we had Greville follow him because of the bomb threat."

"Just Greville?"

"Yes."

"He saw two people."

Alice O'Neill smiled. "Understandable."

"Why don't you get a divorce and change your circumstance, O'Neill?" said Shirman.

"I'm paranoid," said O'Neill. "I like the strife. I'm an Israeli. I'm Ben Gurion. I'm Golda Meir and Moshe Dayan. I got an eyepatch on my tits. I got a machine gun. I got a kibbutz and a postcard with a picture of the Dead Sea. I like to be surrounded by Arabs and outnumbered. I like to raise my voice in the U.N. and exercise indignation. Everybody told me to go to Brooklyn and give up Jerusalem. But I said: What's in Brooklyn? Bensonhurst. What am I gonna do with Bensonhurst? They got no oil there, no shrines, no history, nothing. At night there's nothing to do except go to a second run movie at the Marlboro Theater and platz."

"What does platz mean, John?" said Alice.

"Platz means 'to collapse'. It's Yiddish."

"The Yids have a lot of comical words," she said.

O'Neill looked at Shirman grimly. "When she says that word, 'Yids', I suffer. Do you hear the crass insensitivity in

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her voice?''

''I was only joking,'' said Alice.

''Why do you stay with her, O'Neill?'' said Shirman.

''She's a vitamin,'' said O'Neill.

''It's time to leave,'' said Silas.

''Alice,'' said O'Neill, ''let me touch you one more time.''

Alice hesitated, her eyes watered, then she went to Silas in the doorway, took his arm and left the room.

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Two Poems by Jane Kenyon

MY MOTHER

My mother comes back from a trip downtown to the dime-store. She has brought me a surprise. It is still in her purse.

She is wearing her red shoes with straps across the instep. They fasten with small white buttons, like the eyes of fish.

She has come back with zippers and spools of thread, yellow and green, for her work, which always takes her far away, even though she works in our house, upstairs, in the room next to mine.

She is wearing her blue plaid full-skirted dress with the large collar, her hair fastened up off her neck. She looks pretty. She always dresses up when she goes downtown.

Now she opens her straw purse, which looks like a small suitcase. She hands me the new toy; a wooden paddle with a red rubber ball attached to it by an elastic string. Sometimes when she goes downtown, I think she will not come back.

THE FIRST EIGHT DAYS OF THE BEARD

1. A page of exclamation points.
2. A class of cadets at attention.
3. A school of eels.
4. Standing commuters.
5. A bed of nails for the swami.
6. Flagpoles of unknown countries.
7. Centipedes resting on their laurels.
8. The toenails of the face.

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Five Poems by Paul J.J. Payack

MEMORY, FORGETFULNESS & BEING

They sought to erect a universe upon self-evident truths and decided that if the divine light showed through their handiwork they would neither help it nor hinder it. What was created was a more complex sense of awareness in which epistemological doubt gave way to tailwinds of laughter, the strangeness of things to the consolations of philosophy, the bottom lines to butterflies chasing little dragons.

COMPUTER MISPRINT

The Saint in the secret hours of the night dreams he is pursued by the Eye of God across the desert. He is an apostate yet he is afraid to glance over his shoulder. After a while he reaches the sea, parts the waters thru the blowing of his nostrils and comes to the conclusion that the desert was nothing more than a conspiracy of cartographers.

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LIFE OF THE SAINT

The Saint takes time off from his duties in the harvesting of dew with the intended purpose of consulting the Oracle. He bears the humble carriage of a man who spent his entire life in a quiet quest to alter the verbal environment. 'Today, I finally met God', he says as he enters the Oracle's alleged chamber, 'What does it all mean'? There is no immediate reply but this does not trouble him. (He possesses an eidetic memory yet for some reason he cannot remember much less perceive the Oracle's face.) As he turns to leave a Black Butterfly enters the cubicle, alights on his nose and pronounces in a long-dead language: A DARK SHADOW WILL SHOW YOU THE LIGHT. He understands the words to be those of the Oracle and he departs.

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FOUND ON A MISPLACED MICRODOT

During the Interregnum a piece of music was constructed that was deemed so sacred that it was played only once. The score was then hidden in a vault. And it was forbidden, on the pain of death, to be aired ever again. But, as one can be led to suspect, the tune was so captivating that there were thousands who could never qutie extricate it from their minds. The country was therefore sealed off, all foreigners were expelled, and the cities were emptied. Indeed, this is most curious behavior, but perhaps it can best be explained thru the historical law which states that when a frontier between a more highly and less civilized society ceases to advance, the balance does not settle down to a stable equilibrium but inclines, with the passage of time, in the more backward society's favor.

CONDITIONED REFLEX

They finally construct that perfect figure whose center is everywhere and circumference nowhere. Upon completion they decide that it is not bringing in a large enough profit and so convert it into a factory specializing in fabrication of darkness. None of the townspeople raise their voice for, naturally, they make up the bulk of the payroll.

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Two Poems by Peter Payack

DE GUSTIBUS

"By far the most efficient method of ingesting food is by taking it in through the mouth, chewing, and then swallowing to propel it on its route to the stomach," a noted medical researcher revealed today. "We spent a good deal of time on this problem," said the expert who spent the major part of the last five years pursuing it. A large selection of laboratory animals, ranging from white mice, chimps, and finally to human volunteers, were used to secure the results. "We hope for quick confirmation of our findings," he said referring to the practice in the scientific community of not accepting any results as final until they have been duplicated in independent experimentation. After a brief vacation, his next effort will be to find the most effective method of voiding waste products from the body.

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THE JAM

Mary wants to make some jam, so she buys 1000 mason jars: 700 quart size, 200 pint size, and "for variety" 100 half-pint. She likes making jam. Next she goes to the fruit stand and buys an orchard of peaches, but at 4 pounds to the dollar she feels "it's a steal." The fruit stand delivers the peaches in a truck; it dumps them into the kitchen. The kitchen is getting a little cramped with a ton of peaches and all those mason jars. We phone all the people we know to borrow canning pots. We rent a U-Haul 16 footer to pick them up. We get our sugar directly from Cuba. It costs a little more, and the diplomatic procedures are horrendous, but Mary feels "it's sweeter." For the next 72 hours we peel, dice, and boil peaches, sterilize the jars, and add gallons of pectin which we bought from a wholesaler "at a bargain." After all the jars are filled, we realize we forgot to buy the lids. We call all over, and find that there are none to be had. As the jam begins to spoil, I grow desperate. But not Mary. She feels it was all worth it. She says, "I like making jam."

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Brian Swann

THE GOLDEN AGE

A large room, with an upright harpsichord in one corner. A young lady was playing the instrument, whose face was heavily carved with cherubs and fruit. The young lady played a series of English folksongs and then slipped into Bach's *Passacaglia* in C minor. The notes floated out of the window. Outside the window, parkland stretched away to parterres and ha-has. A small herd of sheep grazed the close grass and the afternoon wore on to a gold that drifted into the room. The rich Norfolk and Berkshire syllables were tinged with a gold edge.

The pleasure of such a life, spacious, decent, civilized, struck the young man in the corner with great force. Above all, the opportunities afforded by leisure made him almost envious. He hadn't thought of it before with any degree of thoroughness, but now he realized that those three men with their high black boots, their waistcoats and dignity need never work in their entire lives. It seemed the right way to live. He was beginning to enjoy the fact that now, as the eldest son, he need never do a stroke of work for his entire life. He began to take an interest in the conversation, and he leaned forward, so a shaft of light struck right across his brow.

"Well, Master Tull, I am struck by the logic and reasonableness of your improvements and would be happy to afford them the opportunity of success here at Holkham. I myself have long thought on the feeding values of certain grasses and the advisability of long leases as incentives to good farming. What is your opinion in this matter, Townsend?"

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His friend was a tall man, rather untidily dressed. The young pale man in the corner out of the sunlight recognized him as "Turnip" Townsend, the 2nd Viscount.

"Ay, well Coke, we've got to do something about our wasteful old common-field system. We've got to get crop-rotation adopted all over this shire and then all over the whole country. The farmers, however, are afraid of improvement, and I can't say I blame them. Once they improve, their landlords put up their rent. But, Master Tull, do you mind going over the pulverizing and drilling bit again? I'm rather slow of understanding. Moreover, my friend Coke has the distinct advantage of living some time before me and is hence closer to the events, and the same advantages accrue to you also, my dear sir. Strictly speaking, I shouldn't even be here, since I wasn't born until 1752, and now it's, what is it today? About 1740?"

"A little earlier, my friend. And your dates are a little confused, as you can check in any history book. It is I who was born in 1752 and died in 1842. You are also forgetting that Tull here died in 1740 as an old man, and here he is, vigorous and at the height of his powers. But no matter. Today is a warm afternoon in the August of 1718. There is a small blight on the appletrees after a week of rather unseasonable rain but otherwise everything is perfect. We are about to reach a decision that will have far-reaching historical implications. You will recall that Arthur Young, writing in 1770, said that the principles originated by Jethro Tull and adopted by me here at Holkham Hall and then adapted and extended by you, spread all over Norfolk, and then over the whole country. It was a great revolution, as great as the so-called Industrial Revolution which Hargreaves and the other hardly northerners instigated in their bleak fastnesses. We should enjoy this moment and the sequent moments to the full, for history will have the last laugh. The greatness of Great Britain which we are about to launch here and now will not last longer than a long breath. But we shall have done our part. This is the beginning of Britain's Golden Age."

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Townsend shifted from one large foot to the other. "Are you serious, Tull, that the food of plants consists of minute particles of earth taken up by the rootlets? It seems to me rather a strange article of faith, though your proofs are strong."

"My lord," said Tull, a vigorous but scholarly-looking man, "that is the reason why the more thoroughly the soil is disintegrated the more abundant will be the pasture to which the fibres have access, as I remarked earlier. Hence the necessity of sowing crops in rows or drills, wide enough to allow tillage till maturity. I myself on my own land have grown as many as thirteen crops of wheat on the same land without manure."

As they stood in the doorway opening onto the pasture the light seemed to intensify. The notes of the harpsichord had died away. There was a great quiet as if everything had stood still for ever.

"Ay, ay," said Coke, "I'm with you most of the way, but you know I'm going to invent the use of oil-cake and bone-manure to go along with the constant breaking up of the earth. You know that, don't you?"

"But that's some time off, my lord. I think we'd all do better now to adopt my system in its entirety, the horse-hoeing and the hand-hoeing. After all, it's been proved effective. As you said, we're looking at the face of a revolution."

All three turned to the young man in the shadows. "Mind you get all this down," said Townsend. "We're relying on you. This is your life."

Only gradually had he begun to realize the possibilities of what he had witnessed, because he was still getting used to the idea of beginning and enjoying a life of total leisure among the landed gentry. But now a new energy began to take hold of him. He had been pitying his friends and colleagues, his rivals, that is, churning out their books and articles and researching, researching in quiet libraries, always

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anxious and sometimes eager. But now he saw he had a tremendous scoop on his hands. Hastily, he dug deep in his pocket for a pencil stub and his notepad which he had stuffed there out of habit. He would make his name for ever. He would be better than a new Boswell because Johnson was only a literary type. These men were revolutionary scientists whose influence would overflow continents, including his own. He wrote quickly, getting down as much of the conversation as possible. He wished he had his typewriter with him for the transcript. He was sure he'd get promoted for his work, at least to Associate Professor, (if Heath left or died he might make Full Professor). He scribbled in a fever. A breeze riffled the corners of the pages. It was all authenticated fact. That was easy enough to check.

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Aurelia Frequenzia Reveals The Heart and Mind of The Man Of Destiny

Richard Stern

I'd come expecting to detest Tao Thinh, I left detesting him, but for a strange moment in between, a moment that was of hours', perhaps days', duration, I experienced with him a kind of devilish sympathy that made for an intimacy closer, and, in its way, more disarming, even incantatory, than would have been possible had our natures harmonized.

We talked over a period of days. The tape recorder is a barnyard of false starts, awkward advances, gauche retreats. Only occasionally is there a clear attack, a progress towards the subject. Without violating the accuracy of his portrait in any essential way, I am preserving here only these authentic developments.

We spoke in of all places Bao Kim, the Vevey of Annam. Here the abstemious Thinh has a pied à terre, *scarcely more than a pair of shacks linked by a courtyard in which is tethered the beautiful incarnation of the devil which may be the only form of non-vegetable life Thinh loves: Kho Tuy, the*

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Leopard, for whom, Thinh, procures meat, drink, and, yes, sex, but who remains, in Thinh's proud description, "implacable in his hatred of me and of any who murder his liberty." This living icon dominated our talk, and now dominates my mind as I work to see Nguyen Tao Thinh there on the planks of Annemese cedar angled from his shack towards the mint-edged lake in the almost alpine semi-circle of the Ran Chieu Hills, these hills which, for Thinh, have each a personality so powerful that he jokes about assigning them telephone numbers and putting them in the Military Directory. "They know me better than any man. You might wish to interview them about me."

Since his deposition in the coup *of May 8, Thinh has stayed in these hills, usually with his marvelously beautiful Japanese companion, Daibata, and their child, a two-year-old boy as beautiful as his mother, as spare and wired as his father, but sightless. The interview as printed here will not reveal Thinh's extraordinary feelings about his only recognized child. (There are supposedly five children whose mother is the Thai princess to whom he was married nine years, and about whom he not only would not talk but whose name made him suddenly vacant as if a question had been asked about the hobbies of the chairs we sat on.)*

Our talk was in French, which he speaks with a strong Annemese accent but with complete fluency.

AF: Mr. Minister—

NTT: *(breaking in easily, authoritatively):* Don't begin with your thumb in the soup. I'm no longer a Minister.

AF: I must call you something. Most men who've run countries prefer the distance of their most exalted title.

NNT: I thought you were of the world. My exalted title is the one my father gave me. Call me that if you want, or better, call me nothing. Ask your questions, I'll answer them. *(Here*

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he pulled the cork from a flask of a scarlet drink, a liquor fermented from a cross between a raspberry and a currant. He poured it into two tin messkit cups; it tasted like sulphur and vinegar. I spat out my first mouthful to his laughter. He offered nothing more; I had to ask him for tea, but that was later, and he called back to Diabata, who brought us a wonderful T'ang brew.)

AF: As you wish, though it seems anyone so sensitive to such minor conventions as titles could not last as long as you did in public office.

NTT: When I was in office, I swallowed ordure from breakfast to supper. Some of my colleagues adjust to such taste; when their stomachs are not treated to it, they are sick with the privation. I ate in public, vomited in private. I thought you were a realist, *mademoiselle.*

AF: Enough to appreciate the courtesy of that title, M. Thinh. But down to brass tacks, if you will. To politics, to life, to money, to your wants, your dreams, your needs, to your mind. *(His hand to the fine pale brown rectangle of forehead.)* Do I disturb you?

NTT: Yes.

AF: You've consented to answer questions. Did you expect me to ask you your saint's day? I can look that up in Paris.

NTT: You disturb me because I think here is a handsome, lean woman with no behind and small breasts who sits by a beautiful lake begging a man she has never met before to let her come into bed with him by attacking everything he says, raiding every gesture he makes for her notebook, feasting on—

AF: We will see about my desires later, Mr. Thinh. The only

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invitation issued and accepted has to do with other matters. Why not proceed? Why divert me with this journalist's portrait of the journalist?

NTT: Continue.

AF: For seven years now, you have fought alongside, perhaps even within the forces of the United States. Before that—

NTT: I know, the French. And you want to know why I—

AF: Perhaps you should conduct the interview. Just as you apparently reverse the roles of patriot and invader by siding with the colonial powers.

NTT: Miss Frequenzia, your breasts would need to be twice their present size to escape the consequences of such a line of questions. *(As my breasts have now twice become a fact of the interview, I had better go on the record to say they have not been found wanting in the occasions to which they have been called.)*

AF: I have been told that Vietnamese men prefer the small breasts of Vietnamese women, and that only those Vietnamese whose taste was corrupted by the milk-and-meat-fed west were obsessed with mammary gigantism or its steatopygous equivalent. Is it the case that you sent your consort to Tokyo for breast-and-buttock enhancement?

NTT: I am suspicious of vocabularies like yours. They are either the fortifications of fear or the clumsily-handled weapons of cowardly belligerence. *(Here a lean, mahogany arm shot out, a piece of meat somehow in its lean claw. The meat was arced toward the tethered Kho Tuy whose terrible ivory knives gripped it in mid-air. I removed my eyes from the brief sequel, though, minutes later, my ears and nostrils were treated to the consequence of the furious ingestion.)*

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AF: How do you see your future?

NTT: In the exquisitely mendacious crystals below your eyebrows.

AF: If you read it there, you also see a gallows.

NTT: I see a divan of reeds. I see a white woman terrified, bound to the divan. I see black musculature aquiver over a too-thin, too-flat, aging, powdered body. I see—

AF: Too much and not enough.

NTT: The papaya genitalia of a black leopard stiff with specie-crossing tension. I close my eyes to the scene.

AF: Your mother owns the pedicab concession of the capital, your consort the race track at Ne Hai. Although you have never drawn more than an army colonel's salary, you own a jet airplane, four villas, a diamond belt; your consort's Bentley has an emerald licence plate which is guarded by machine gunners who spend three hour periods of duty in its trunk. I could go on with the list of those stupendous superfluities which have stripped how many thousands of your fellow countrymen of their rice, their shirts, their leisure. You claim to be a patriot, interested in nothing but the expulsion of the communists—

NTT: And the white flesh that befouls our streets.

AF: And keeps your villas for you. How reconcile your piracy and your supposed patriotism?

NTT: Reconciliation is the job of a woman. And a journalist. I am a soldier. One who likes his comfort.

AF: You have been called a thief, a narcissist, a megalomaniac.

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NTT: You are articulate.

AF: Trials are made with words, but their consequences can be deeds. Death.

NTT: Perhaps. But feline menace is only words.

(I love hate. The men and women whom I interview work against the grain of my rational disposition, but they grip me. Deeply. Nguyen Tao Thinh, sitting before me with the coldness of a glacier—a glacier of brown sugar—drove through my hatred to some untouched organ of fear, hatred, and—I will confess it—lust. I rose from my chair, I walked to his. I have short, ugly hands. To distract from them, I have let my nails grow long and carmined them. On safari, in the jungle, the desert lying under the moon on a mountainside, I tender these nails. Now I brought them against his throat. His eyes, anthracite bits, flamed. His silly, twenties' mustache bobbed, amused. His arms rose between mine, and with a single move broke my hold. And then, not his beloved beast, but he himself—though clothed, and, as I could tell, unextended—stood face to my face, lips open, white, tobacco-spattered teeth in grimace, nose against mine, lips on mine.

We stood there, unmoving in this extraordinary expression of intimate, unreconciliable farewell.)

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How To Name Your Baby

John Train

INTRODUCTION

The work of the Office of Nomenclature Stabilization can be said to have started in the period 1949-1951, although its full organization in its present form—the voluminous files, the worldwide network of correspondents—only came later.

In one of those years John Train, then studying for a Master's degree at Harvard in Comparative Literature, noticed in *Collier's* magazine a Mr. *Katz Meow*, of Hoquiam, Washington. He mentioned it shortly afterward to Professor Howard Mumford Jones, who replied that during World War II he'd had a secretary named Miss *Pensive Cocke*. Soon after, Train reported this to a graduate school colleague who observed that while in uniform he had processed the Army discharge of a soldier named *Welcome Baby Darling* (now of Greenwich, Connecticut). Train, bemused, wrote all this down in the back of his notebook.

A little later in H.L. Mencken was discovered *Positive Wasserman Jackson*, and in Winston-Salem, N.C. *Bunyan Snipes Womble* and his son *Cadwallader Wellington Womble*.

Later sources provided Miss *Caresse Pecor* (University of Vermont, 1971) as well as Doctor *Ovary*, a gynecologist at New York Hospital . . . and, of course, *Madame Ovary*.

In any event, Train felt a scholarly obligation to open a proper dossier to record the particulars of these discoveries, which seemed to have relevance to his then field of Comp. Lit.

The problem was to assure accuracy. In general, a documented source is required. One can scarcely go through life without appearing in print somewhere, at the least in a telephone directory, and with enough time a written authentication can usually be unearthed.

In the early '50's, Train moved to Paris. He was part of the group that founded this *Review*, of which he was for many years Managing Editor,

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while continuing his work in nomenclature.

The roster grew, as did the network of reliable correspondents. Some of the most valuable have been Joseph Fox, of Random House; Robert Myrhum, of CBS; Candida Donadio; Charles Harding, Chairman of Smith, Barney & Company; and S.J. Perelman, of *The New Yorker.*

(Additional submissions are warmly welcomed, by the way; always, however, with the fullest available documentation.)

In time, a formal organization of the work became inevitable, and the Office of Nomenclature Stabilization took shape, crystallizing into its present form.

Eventually those concerned with the O.N.S. became convinced that the results should be made available to a wider circle.

The reason is readily explained.

A dull name often means a dull child, and in an age of mass-men America scarcely needs more nonentities called "Chick" or "Buddy."

No; the times call, instead, for new generations of pioneers and founders, men of strong characters . . . strong names.

Could Napoleon Bonaparte have torn down and rebuilt a continent if born Alfonse Petit? Could Winston Spencer Churchill have roused the English-speaking world as Ed Brown? Never. Gen. *Ulysses* Grant! What panache! Had his parents copped out with "Tim" or "Chuck" the Union must have been sundered. There would be no bicentennial.

The Office has therefore sought in recent years to extend encouragement and example to parents tempted to settle for some lifeless damper of a name, leading to a weak and soggy younger generation born already on one knee, so to speak, before a power-greedy bureaucracy.

Alas, no commercial publisher, no foundation has come forward—perhaps because the *spiritus rector* is a mere "John" instead of a "Pontius," "Vercingetorix," or even "Lionel."

Rather than wait indefinitely for a commercial or university publisher who may never appear, the O.N.S. has now consented to publish the accompanying fragments in *The Paris Review*, with which it enjoys so many ties of sentiment and history.

—THE EDITORS

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(The New York Times)

A. Moron, Commissioner of Education
Virgin Islands

Antigone Rosencrantz

Aphrodite Chuckass

A. Przybysz*
Detroit

Ave Maria Klinkenberg
Yonkers, New York

Private Baby Cherry
U.S. Army (225th Quartermaster Battalion)

Bambina Broccoli
New York

Bathsheba Finkelstein
High School of Music & Art (Class of 1957)

B. Brooklyn Bridge
Boston

*Changed his name in 1940—to. C. Przybysz.

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Mrs. Belcher Wack Wack*

Beverley Cuntley

Buncha Love**
(Newsweek)

Bunyan Snipes Womble
and
Cadwallader Wellington Womble
Winston-Salem

Rev. Canaan Banana
African National Council, Rhodesia

Carborundum Petroleum Dobbs, Mayor
Willmette, Illinois

Caresse Pecor
University of Vermont (Class of 1971)

Carlos Restrepo Restrepo Restrepo de Restrepo
Medillin, Colombia

Carpett Bagger
Princeton

*Miss Belcher married Mr. Wack and then married his brother.

**Compare Felicity Pratt Love, New York.

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C. Brumitt Goodykoontz

Rev. Christian Church*
Florence, Italy

Cigar Stubbs
Bureau of Vital Statistics, Florida

Clytymnestra Katz

Col. Clarence Clapsaddle
U.S. Army (West Point Class of 1940)

Sir Cloudsley Shovel, Admiral**
Royal Navy

Mr. Cock married Miss Prick
(London Times)

Concepcion de Jesus
New York

Concerto Macaroni

*Compare Christ Apostle, New York City.

**Ran the fleet on the rocks (Scilly Isles) in 1707, drowning 2,000 men. He himself made it ashore, only to be done in by a peasant woman who apparently did not like the look of him. His gallant colleague Admiral The Hon. Sir Reginald Aylmer Ranfurley Plunket Ernle-Erle-Drax participated in the Battle of Jutland.

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Crapper, Limited, Toilets*
London

Cumming & Gooing
Louisiana
(The New Yorker)

D. Schumuk, Political Activist**
Ukraine
(Reuters)

Daphne Readers Digest Taione
Tonga
(*Reader's Digest* Association)

DeFred Goo Folts, Director of Placement
Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration

Doctor Doctor***
(American Medical Directory)

Dweezle
and
Moon Unit Zappa
(Time)

*Sir Thomas Crapper's biography is aptly titled *Flushed With Pride.*

**A loser. Served 7 years in jail (prewar) for communism. Then (postwar) served 20 years and (starting 1972) 10 additional years plus 5 years exile, all for anti-communism.

***There were, by recent count, 13 doctors Doctor, Docter, or Doktor in the U.S., 5 doctors Bonebreak, 1 Bonecutter, 18 Butchers, several Cutters and Carvers, 184 Paines or Paynes, and 11 Pangs.

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E. Flack Ackley
New York

Fanny Bumpus, Wife of Tom Thumb*

Fanny Kissem, Authoress**

Farkas Calnooky
New Hampshire

Fauxpas-Bidet, Commissaire de Police***
Sureté Nationale, Paris

F.G. Vereneseneckockkrockoff****
San Francisco

Baroness Gaby von Bagge of Boo
(The New York Times)

George Baretits
U.S. Army

*Enjoyed the specialized distinction of being fought over by two midgets.

**Compare Fanny Hyman, Washington, D.C.; Hyman Peckeroff, Taxi Driver, New York; and Fanny Finger, New York; also Mrs. Regina Finger.

***The Sureté's ace on Russian intrigues, Fauxpas-Bidet hit the tabloids in the 1930's when he investigated the abduction of Gen. Kutylpov, a White Russian leader in Paris. The General was seized in the street by OGPU agents and apparently, wrapped up like merchandise, was carried on board a Soviet ship, the *Spartak,* which immediately put out to sea.

****Defendant in a celebrated murder trial in 1897. See *Personalities of Language* (Gollancz, London, 1967).

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Gisella Werberserch-Piffel, Actress*
Hollywood
(Reader's Digest)

Glycerine Sipp
New Orleans

Goody P. Creep, Undertaker**

Hadassah Katzinellenbogen
New Hampshire

Halloween Buggage
New Orleans

Horacine Clutch
Pelham, New York

(Miss) Horsey de Horsey
Intimate friend of Lord Cardigan

Hudson Ford Packard

Hugh Pugh, Landscape Architect
London

*Perennial victim of prewar Hollywood jokers who liked to telephone from poolside to ask if she was the Gisella Werberserch-Piffel they had met in (e.g.) Monte Carlo the previous summer; on receiving assurance to the contrary they would pronouce grandly, "Ah! Then that must have been *another* Gisella Werberserch-Piffel!" Compare Josette Legg Snowball, Actress (D'Oyly Carte Company).

**Compare Groaner Digger, Undertaker, Houston, Texas.

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Humperdink Fangboner, Lumber Dealer
and
Fanny Fangboner, Nurse
Sandusky, Ohio*

I.C. Shivers, Iceman
John Hancock Life Insurance Company

I.O. Silver

I.P. Frilli, Master Mechanic**
Florence, Italy

John Senior, Junior
New York

Joy Bang, Actress***
New York

July August September
(Today's Health)

*Sandusky, like some towns in Florida, seems to breed families who feel better having odd names. Other citizens in the area include Ovid Futch, Kitty Ditty, and (from the *Sandusky Register*) E. Kickapoo Banfill, Lecturer. Larry Derryberry has become the State's Attorney General.

**Compare P.P. Fast, Florida; E.C. Crapp, Washington, D.C.; and Gladstone P. Lillycrap, U.S. Attorney. A Mr. Uren changed his name to Wren (1897)—quite understandably. Sharon Willfahrt, Toilet Jacobs and Tom Passwater were students at the Art Instruction School, Minneapolis.

***Compare Mrs. Friendly Ley of Mission Hills, California, whose career of amiability was ended when Mr. Ley's revolver, which he was cleaning in the kitchen, went off.

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Katz Meow
Hoquiam, Washington

Kwock K. Jew
New York

Lavender Sidebottom, Masseuse*
Elizabeth Arden, New York

Linus Kluemper**
Jasper, Indiana

Luscious Pea
New Orleans

Lyulph Ydwallo Odin Nestor Egbert Lyonel Toedmag Hugh Erchenwync Saxon Esa Cromwell Orma Nevill Dysart Plantagenet Tolemache-Tolemache
Burke's Peerage, Pre-War (Baronetcy of Tolmache)

Mac Aroni
Bureau of Vital Statistics, Florida

Major Minor
U.S. Army

*N.b.: Epitaph on Mr. Longbottom, who died young: *Arse longa, vita brevis.*

**Attained celebrity in August, 1955 when a fan in his bedroom window backed 5 feet toward him and chopped off the big toe of his right foot.

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Manon Lescaut Voictsberger
Massachusetts

Marmaduke Wallop
London

Mary Maloof Teabaggy
Boston

Melissa Dalcini Caldony Yankee Pankee Devil-Take-The-Irishman Garrison
Tryon City, North Carolina

Moo May, Boo May, Goo May
and
Little Miss May
New Orleans

Mustafa Kunt, Turkish Military Attaché*
Moscow

Newton Hooton
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Nicholas Guppy
The Pond, Haddenham, Cambridgeshire

Nita Bath

*Occasion of much ribald cable traffic, along with his vis-à-vis, Major R. Rectanus, U.S. Assistant Military Attaché, Moscow.

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Noble Butt*
Boston

Noble Teat**
Still Pond, Maryland

Norman Icenoggle
(Associated Press)

Ogbert Snort

O. Hell, Contractor
Alto Adige, Italy

Onesiphorus, Epaphroditus,
and
(Archbishop) Narcissus Marsh
(The New York Times)

Mrs. Opal Balls

Opel Buns

M. Oral Clutter

*Compare Violet Butt, Washington, D.C.

**Compare Faithful Teate, Dublin ("who wrote a quaint poem on the Trinity"—*Encyclopaedia Britannica*).

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Osborn Outhouse
Boston

Dr. Ovary, Gynecologist
New York Hospital

Miss Pensive Cocke, Secretary*
U.S. Army Air Corps

Phoebe B. Beebe Peabody
Dedham, Massachusetts

Plato Foufas, Real Estate
Chicago

Plummer & Leek, Plumbers
Sheringham, Norfolk
(London Times)

Positive Wasserman Jackson
(H.L. Mencken)

Primose Goo
Hawaii

*Compare Mrs. Seeman Glasscock; J. Badcock, Editor, London; D. Grewcock, Stockbroker, New York; and the Griesedieck family, Milwaukee. Respectful note must also be taken of the good Cornish family of Trebilcock and concerned awareness bestowed on Prof. O.J. Cockshut. W.J. Uglow Wollcock appears in *Boyle's Court Guide* for 1915. The Koch Erecting Company is a major supplier to New York City. Cinderella Hardcock and Douglas Biggerdick were students at the Art Instruction School, Minneapolis.

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Rapid Integration
(Newsweek)

Ronald Supena, Lawyer

Rosetta Stone
New York

Salome Casanova
Havana

Santiago Nudelman, Publisher
Brazil

Sexious Boonjug

Siddhartha Greenblatt
(Harper's Magazine)

Silence Bellows, Editor
(Christian Science Monitor)

Sinbad Nimrod

Sistine Madonna McClung

Sodawater Bottlewalla
Bombay, India
(The New York Times)

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Strangeways Pigg Strangeways, Cricket Star
London

Supply Clapp Thwing
Harvard Class of 1837

Mrs. Tackaberry McAdoo
New York

Tetley Ironsides Tetley-Jones, Chairman
Tetley Tea Company

T. Hee, Cartoonist
New York

Tonsillitis, Meningitis, Appendicitis, Laryngitis, and Peritonitis Jackson
(Time)

Trailing Arbutus Lightly

U. Fuk*
Istanbul

Mrs. V.D. Whynot

Mr. Venus Bonaparte
(London Times)

Verbal Funderburk
Lakeland, Florida

*Compare Motel Fuchs, Rio de Janeiro.

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Virginia May Sweatt Strong
Memphis, Tennessee

Violet Organ, Art Historian

Mr. Vroom, Motorcycle Dealer
Port Elizabeth, South Africa
(The New York Times)

Warren Peace*
Franklin K. Lane High School, New York

Sir W.C. Dampier-Whetham
Upwater Lodge, Cambridge

Welcome Baby Darling
Greenwich, Connecticut

William McKinley Louisiana Leveebust Smith
(H.L. Mencken)

Wyre & Tappen, Private Investigators**
New York City

Yale Harvard Pinsker
Harvard University

Zoda Viola Klontz Gazola

*Compare Peese Porrich.

**The Office of Nomenclature Stabilization has a photograph of this establishment, dating from the 1960s.

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Belly Up

William Reese Hamilton

It turned out Harry Barnes was on his way back to the States from China. His friend Barney Jenkins had died from an infection of the kidneys the doctors in Hong Kong had been unable to diagnose properly, and at the end, when Jenkins was in very real pain and knew he would not last long, Harry Barnes had promised that he would get his remains back to his wife and kid in Los Angeles.

Harry had developed a real affection for Jenkins, who was a reporter. Jenkins had once persuaded him to join him on a flight up the Yangtze to Hankow when he was covering the Jap assault on China in thirty-eight, and together they had waited in the city, feeling with the Chinese that one wonderful moment of temporary unity and direction. Jenkins had covered China for news agencies on and off for years. He had been at the Shanghai Insurrection in twenty-seven. He had interviewed Sun Yat-sen and Borodin—stuff like that—and he taught Harry Barnes a great deal. Even though they had almost gotten killed when the Japs clamped a pincers move-

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ment on Hankow, Harry kept a special fondness for his friend. Besides, along with burdening him with the body, Jenkins had paid his passage. China had gone sour for Harry, and he didn't mind leaving a bit. He had Jenkins cremated to make him more portable.

His ship docked in Manila just as the first Jap bombers were leaving to destroy the American military force in the Philippines. He had been in Manila before and he thought it was a rotten town. "Too damn many black bugs," he said. "The sweet smell of copra on the docks and the damn black bugs." Now he was stuck in Manila with the black smoke pouring into the sky out of Nichols Field and Cavite Naval Depot and Jap Zeros dive-bombing and strafing the harbor and anything they could see along the Pasig River.

He got a room at the Manila Hotel and stayed there off-and-on for a couple of weeks. But it was like a refugee station, people crowding in from all over the city and then scattering out in all directions like so much chaff in the wind. Still, it was all right while the bar was open. But it was getting near Christmas, and somehow Christmas seemed important this year. He could never have said why. It might have been Jenkins dead and his family waiting for him in the States, or the way the Japs were tearing hell out of the Port Area, or being in a tropical city where he had no roots, or just some irrational sinking feeling he was developing about the whole bloody mess. He called some friends who were supposed to be in town, but the lines were overloaded, and when he did manage to get through, nobody was home. Spending Christmas in the Manila Hotel was not his idea of the Hallelujah Chorus. He grabbed Jenkins and went for a walk.

He walked along the Luneta, which was big and open and green by the sea wall on Manila Bay. American troops, still in good spirits, were dug in there with sandbags in front of their foxholes, their observers scanning the skies with field glasses. But then Jap planes came, high up and in precise formation, and the American anti-aircraft fell so far short of them they didn't even break pattern. It was very frustrating. The sol-

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diers swore and shook their fists, but the formation moved on to the south. He felt outside it, the way it had been for him in China. He was standing there in his white suit, the sun shining off the bay, the small silver planes high up in the sky. The soldiers, bustling about on the green lawn, making war on those far-off unreachable objects, were ridiculous in their frustration. It was like being an observer at a game.

He started walking south along Dewey Boulevard by the bay, carrying the urn of Jenkins' ashes in against his jacket. When he looked across the bay, the Mariveles Mountains were pale with a haze lying over them. When he looked back at the Port Area, there was smoke and the masts of sunken ships jutting from the water. If he had kept walking south he would have passed by the Malate district and gone on out of the city, but it was too hot for that. He put the urn carefully against the trunk of a palm tree and sat down on the cool grass. He took out a cigar he had bought the night before in the Manila Hotel bar. It was slim and black and long. He smelled it and wet the end. He lit it and tasted the bittersweet smoke. He sat there with his back against the palm tree, looking out across the water.

Six Jap Zeros came in high over the mountains to the north, banked above him and went into a dive toward the Port Area. He smoked his cigar and watched the planes playing follow the leader up the Pasig River. The idea of being trapped here in this town just now had no appeal in it for him. It was like being forced to see newsreels for the second and third times.

Last night at the hotel he had asked about Christmas trees, and someone had told him that was all off since Pearl Harbor. Usually they had had fine trees from Washington and Oregon, but this year they would just have to use their imaginations.

"Stick around for New Years," someone said. "I got a feeling the *fireworks* are gonna get through." That was the kind of weak humor you got in the Manila Hotel bar. He put that up against the crackle maple makes when it burns and

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the smell of pine and the taste of hot wassail the way Dickens wrote it and all that corny Santa Claus and red-cheeked kids in the snow stuff, and it made him low and sentimental. Sentimentality made him feel as impure as waking up in the morning and seeing the excuse-of-a-woman he had picked up drunk the night before.

He began to walk again. Last year at Christmas, he thought, Jenkins had just sent his wife home. He had to cover Shanghai and he didn't think it was wise for her to stay on in China. Good old Barney had thrown a dinner party at the *Sincere*—large, with many waiters clustering and talking and bustling back and forth. He must have had twenty-some people there. He'd given them plenty to drink, but they were all still reserved; and it upset him. The table was white and spotlessly clean, with the best service in the city, and he was giving them Peking duck with a lot of local Kiangsu dishes. Jenkins got up at the head of the table and raised the soy sauce to his guests as if he were about to toast someone. "Friends, you need to loosen up a bit. If the chopsticks slip and you spill a little, it's not going to hurt a bloody thing. This is to Christmas cheer!" he said. And then, leaning over his guests, he spilled a thin black trail down the entire length of the white table. Harry remembered seeing his waiter trying to hold back a smile. After that they were as open and free as if they'd had their shoes off. That beat the hell out of Tiny Tim and that "God bless us every one!" crap, Barnes thought.

As he was walking along, seeing Jenkins, jovial and red-mustached, leading them all, full of duck and hot rice wine, in a wonderful cacophonous carol sing, a black Lincoln Zephyr pulled off the boulevard beside him.

"Say, this is one hell of a spot you picked for a walk, fellow," a voice from the car said. He saw the Filipino chauffeur, and then, bending down, he looked into the back. A tall thin man dressed for tennis was sitting there with a bottle of Gordon's gin on his lap.

"Hello to *you,* sir," Barnes said with a very friendly smile.

"I say you're going to get killed out there."

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"Not likely. They never shoot at a man in a white suit. Not *Bushido*, you know. It's my flag of neutrality."

"It seems to me I've seen a few Filipinos in those flags being chased by Zeros in the city."

"But then, you see, I'm not Filipino."

"You're not from Manila, I take it," said the man in the car. He had a long tan face, like a dun mare.

"No, Jenkins and I just got in from Hong Kong. Ship's departure time has been unfortunately delayed."

"Jenkins?"

"Yes," Harry said, "my friend." He held out his arm.

"I see. Well, the least I can do is offer you a ride. I'm on my way over to the Polo Club. Why don't you stop over and have a drink with me." He opened the back door and Harry didn't make him ask twice.

"This is damn generous of you."

"Yes. Well, it seemed the right thing when I saw you at sea out there."

"Really? At sea. That's an evil sign," Harry said. He couldn't understand this fellow's generosity. Somehow, he just did not seem the type. "I'm afraid I have a hitchhiker's judgment. I'm a bit surprised when I get picked up by a Lincoln."

"Yes. Your judgment is probably correct. I doubt I would have even seen you on a usual day. Shows you what a war can do."

"Just a few bombs make you a sudden Samaritan?"

"I had gotten so used to the drive, you see, I never really looked anymore. But now I never know if I will be able to drive it again."

"Yes, Manila is going to be different," Harry said, and he wondered if he really cared about the town. Even with this man here he was outside it. What was this the death of? he thought. This lazy, over-ripe tropical city. The sweet smell hit you when you weren't thinking about it, around a corner. The smell of a whore. What was old Ezra Pound talking about? "An old bitch gone in the teeth." That was what

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Manila was. Ezra was talking about Europe, he thought.

"Do you play polo?" the owner of the Zephyr said when they got to the club.

"Do I have to to get in?"

"No," the man said, chuckling. "Not at all. I only meant my son had the ponies up and you could have a go if you wished."

"I could play if my drink depended on it," Harry said. The man put the Gordon's on the back seat.

"My office bottle," he said. "I never know if I'll get back."

The club was low-buildinged under large, cool shade trees, and they drank under the trees, watching the man's son whack the willow ball across the large well-kept field. Everything was clean there and lush. They were playing tennis and swimming in the large pool. It was a family club and children ran under the trees. Barnes could still see smoke, even closer now to the south, but it seemed irrelevant in the cool under the trees.

"This beats hell out of the Manila Hotel," he said.

"Yes, I'd say. What do you think of the ponies?" While the son rode, a Filipino groom held a second pony under the trees.

"Very nice. Why is he riding out there by himself?"

"Training the ponies. Got to keep them in shape," the man said. "And it's good for Roger. Keeps his mind off things." Nice of them to keep their horses trim for the Japs, Harry thought. They will make fine cavalry ponies.

"Would you care to have a *chukker* or two with my boy?"

"Perhaps later," Harry said. He ordered two more gins.

The sun was bright on the field, and the horse moved handsomely after the ball. He really was well trained. The boy rode well and handled the mallet with fair accuracy. Polo ponies turned like cats, and the sound the ash of the mallet made against the willow ball was solid and satisfying, but he could never gather up anything more than a cool enthusiasm for the sport. The helmet and uniform were really quite good

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looking, but jodhpurs had the unfortunate effect of conjuring up the atmosphere of hunt clubs and debutante balls back in Greenwich, Connecticut—all that cold aloofness the right people developed from wearing evening clothes and riding breeches. He had broken with all that quite nicely by coming out to the Orient, but whenever he watched polo in China or India, the jodhpurs did that to him and ruined it for him.

Harry was just winding up his fourth gin when his host's wife and daughter came off the tennis courts and joined them under the trees.

"Hello, Daddy," the daughter called from a distance. She was gangling and mare-faced like her father. She must be hell on the tennis courts, he thought. He suddenly realized that he didn't even know the name of this guy he was drinking with. He stood up awkwardly as the women came to the table and sat down, looking at him but talking to the other man, and then he saw that the fellow wasn't going to make any attempt at introduction.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I'm Harry Barnes."

"Oh yes," the man said. "Haverford, here." No one else mentioned names. He saw that they did not mind his not knowing. The daughter eyed the urn on the table.

"I haven't seen you here before, have I, Mr. Burns?" she said.

"Oh, no. Mr. Haverford picked me up on Dewey Boulevard."

"Picked him up, Montgomery?" the wife said.

"What?" the husband said. "Oh, yes."

"Picked him up?"

"Yes. Told him he was damn lucky he wasn't killed, wandering out there in the open." The two women eyed him very suspiciously. He tried to show them that he was, after all, civilized.

"I've been admiring your son's riding," he said, trying to sound enthusiastic. "He's done a nice job on those ponies."

"Quite," the mother said. "He's very keen on it." Her

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daughter was perspiring from the tennis, but she looked very cool. Funny, being on the outside, he thought. He'd seen this many times over, but rarely from the outside. They began talking about someone they'd just seen. The women were always the experts at this. Why were they the ones who always queered things? The women and the effeminate men. Usually these little foreign communities were at least superficially friendly. He wondered what it was. Had he really rubbed Greenwich off so well, it didn't show anymore? Perhaps it was the urn. That and the little phrase about being picked up. This one liked to at least pretend she had sensibilities. She had gotten that crisp British edge on it very nicely, too.

"I think I'll try the polo," Harry said. "You won't mind my leaving Jenkins here with you."

"Really, Montgomery!" he heard Mrs. Haverford say as he was walking away. He was damn glad the old man had not offered him a pair of jodhpurs. When the sun hit him out on the field, he realized he had been drinking. He took his coat off and loosened his tie. Then under the small separate clump of trees, he handed his jacket to the groom, picked up the polo mallet and mounted the pony. He had a little trouble getting his foot in the stirrup, but then he had not been on horseback since he had ridden up to the Great Wall when he was in Peking over three years ago. Here you are, Mr. Barnes, seated nobly atop your mount. Having just dismounted from a long expedition by elephant, you have hurried to the *Maidan* to have a few *chukkers* with that ruddy leftenant in His Brittanic Majesty's Royal Hussars. Oh, you bloody drunken ass. And only four gins. He nudged his pony into a trot across the field.

"Halloa, Roger!" he yelled. Young Haverford reined in and watched Barnes come toward him. Harry wheeled the horse in beside him. "Hello. Your father persuaded me to give it a go with you."

"Splendid," young Haverford said, his voice more British than his mother's.

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"I was watching you play. You made a fine picture."

"She's a top-notch pony."

"One *chukker* will do me," he said, trying to out-British the British and the pseudo-British both.

"Oh, no," young Haverford said. "I'm quite sure you won't wish to quit there."

"Let's give it a go, shall we." The cane handle of the mallet felt awkward in his hand. He gave his whole arm and mallet a few rotations to limber up his shoulder and get the feel. He suddenly saw how he must appear out there to the Haverfords, and the whole spectacle took on the appeal of a whimsical scene out of a Charlie Chaplin. He gave his arm another rotation and guffawed.

He was surprised himself at how well he rode. But then it really was a fine pony he had. At first he kept missing the ball, but once he found the range, he was whacking away right along with Roger, and hearing the solid satisfying wood-on-wood. The sweat poured down his back and chest inside his shirt. When they reined in he was exhausted.

"Have you played much?" Roger asked.

"Not recently," he said very pompously.

"You did quite well. Care to go another *chukker*?"

"Rather!" He toyed with the idea of running that little Haverford bastard into the ground in front of his family, but he felt in really rotten shape all at once, and realized that the youngster could probably run *him* into the ground without much trouble. It was shortly after that that he lost his seat and fell trying to whack the ball a good one, staining his white trousers nicely. Of course he remounted with casual grace, but the dash was out of the game and he was relieved to see the play come to an end.

"Thanks awfully," he said.

"Quite."

He walked back to the Haverfords' table under the trees, straightening his tie and putting the jacket on over his soaked shirt.

"Thank you for an enjoyable afternoon," he said.

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"Sorry you must go."

"Yes, I have to get back to the city. Perhaps I can get *picked up* again." They did not seem to appreciate his humor. He picked up the urn and went to the front drive of the club. He was fortunate to catch a ride back to the hotel with a man on his way into the city.

"I'm going in the back way," the man said. "The main streets are jamming up with troops."

"Yeah?" Harry said. "Where they going?"

"Rumor has it they're evacuating Manila."

"Swell."

"MacArthur and Quezon left today. They're setting up headquarters on Corregidor."

"Sort of leaves us floating belly up," Harry said.

Getting out on the drive in front of the Manila Hotel, he was again repelled by the thought of going in. It was not that it wasn't a good hotel—large and square-fronted with a handsome entrance and spacious lobby. It was the sandbagging in front of the windows and everybody jamming into the lobby when the air raids came. He had the sudden horrible premonition that the ceiling would come down on top of them while he was crammed in next to some woman like Mrs. Haverford. It was hell not to be able to die with some shred of personal dignity. He turned and walked away, this time to the north, past the South Harbor area and into the Port Area. At least there he could sense the full truth of this abysmal mess.

The bombs had been falling there all day, and smoke and dust from pulverized concrete hung over that whole section. The old walled city to his right was also burning. The streets were filled with rubble, and even though it was still afternoon, the sun was blanketed by the smoke and the streets were dark. Ahead a streetcar had been thrown against the buildings. The rails behind it twisted and curled into the air. The car still stood upright, as if it had been parked by a drunken driver, but when he got closer, the side was pushed in and the windows smashed. There were no dead in that

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street.

Nearer the docks, he saw several large fires with firemen running and calling to each other, but he only saw them from a distance because he turned up another street to see if it was at all familiar. Many of the street signs were gone, but he did not think they would help anyway. On that street there were several dead who had not been picked up. One man lay face down against a building. He was small and dressed in a white suit, and Harry thought at first that he might be a sleeping drunk. But when he came closer to see, the man's face was gone. He was not used to seeing dead dressed in Western clothes. The dead he had seen were mostly blue-clad coolies.

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Jean Le Gac (cont'd)

The Excursion

It could be, in the manner of a plate taken from the ENCYCLOPEDIA by DIDEROT and d'ALEMBERT, one of those constructions due to the industrious genius of CYRUS SMITH the engineer, and of his companions, in the book "L'ILE MYSTERIEUSE" by the French writer JULES VERNE, when, latter-day Robinsons full of faith in materialism and mechanics, for survival they experience, condensed in time, some of the discoveries of mankind, from fire to electricity by way of pottery and dynamite.

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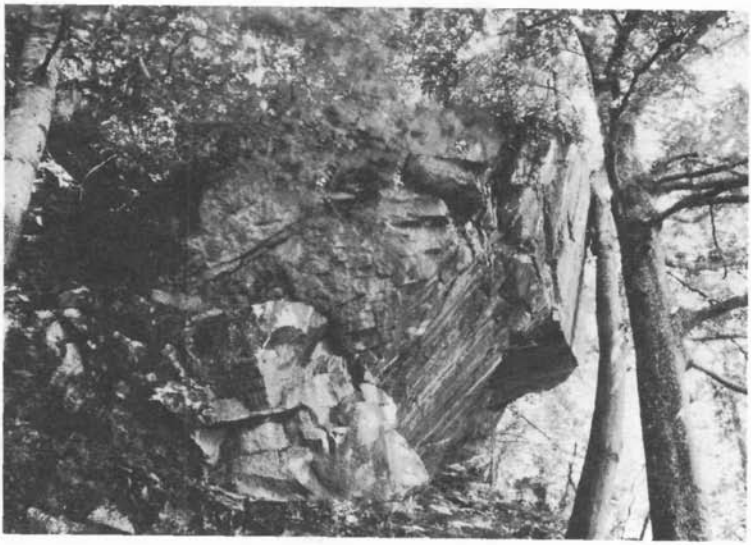

It could be the painting by the French artist CEZANNE entitled "DANS LE PARC DU CHATEAU NOIR!"

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It could be, but not as brand-new, the SILVER CITY station in "COLORADO," a book by the American novelist LOUIS BROMFIELD!

Anybody who is somebody in Silver City is on the station platform. MADGE herself, in a flowery dressing gown, has briefly relaxed the watch she keeps on the boarders, the 'girls', the gaming tables and the drinks, in order to witness from the balcony of her establishment the return of P.J., JUNIOR.

From the saloon car of the P.J. MEANEY railway company's "COLORADO BLUE BELL," alights DICK (youngest of the three sons of the silver mine, ranch and warehouse tycoon of the same name) with his three traveling companions, MR. CECIL M. CHATSWORTHY, the young man's mentor at Oxford, MADEMOISELLE DA PONTE, an extremely youthful singer on tour in the New World to appear at the Opera in the role of VIOLETTE if fortune smiles on her, and the prima donna's old uncle PROFESSOR ALONZO DA PONTE, a pianist gone to seed.

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It could be, beyond the hills, the cottage of the SEVEN DWARFS, in a fairy-tale by the German writer GRIMM!

The house is closed because no one expects them. They no longer stupidly intone "whistle while you work" as they did previously in the film by the American director WALT DISNEY, without wondering on whose account they have the task of extracting all the ore and all the gold from the mountain. No doubt chance has not yet brought the son of a king to the forest where SNOW WHITE, in her glass casket, looks exactly as though she were sleeping.

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It could be the floating house that appears on the sleeping waters of the Midi Canal in "SANS FAMILLE," a book by the French writer HECTOR MALOT.

His good old master SIGNOR VITALIS having been unjustly imprisoned, REMI, the foundling, finds himself alone and helpless with the other members of the troupe; CAPI, the white poodle, the two unfortunate performing dogs ZERBINO and DOLCE who, a little later, will be devoured by the wolves in the forest of Troyes, and JOLIE-COEUR the little monkey.

For the moment, LADY MILLIGAN has taken pity on them. For her young son, confined to his sick-bed at the front of the slowly travelling barge, Remi sings a Neapolitan song while accompanying himself on the harp:

FENESTRA VACIA E PATRONA CRUDELE
QUANTA SOSPIRE M'AJEFATTO JETTARE
M'ARDE STOCORE COMM'A NA CANNELA
BELLA QUANNO TE SENTO ANNO MENNARRE

There are still many hardships and tears ahead for REMI before it is revealed that this lovely English lady is his mother and he goes to live with his rich family in THE MANOR HOUSE AT MILLIGAN PARK.

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It could be, abandoned on location, the hastily erected scaffolded chapel that is inaugurated in "MY DARLING CLEMENTINE" (*), the film by the American director JOHN FORD!

Perfumed and clean-shaven, WYATT EARP the sheriff, stiff as a poker, has escorted CATHY DOWNS, in the part of CLEMENTINE CARTER to the open air ceremony.

The sermon is over. They have rung the bells one last time at full peal and declared the Sunday dance open. CATHY DOWNS has just given her first dance to a bare-headed HENRY FONDA, who ceremoniously holds his partner's jacket folded over his arm.

(*) French title: "LA POURSUITE INFERNALE."

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It could be the MENDELSOHNSTRASSE . . . or some other, anyway one of those suburban alleys, forgotten in the backwaters of large cities, described by the Belgian writer JEAN RAY!

The remarkable thing, in fact, is that there is nothing extraordinary about this street. That it is deserted at this time of the afternoon, when the children are still in school, cannot come as a surprise to the passing pedestrian, the sound of whose footsteps is coming closer. If a cat disappears into the recess of a suddenly closed door, it should not be read as the sign of a hidden threat, but as the childish reflex of an old lady caught in the act of being curious.

Yet two numbers down, at 92B, behind the secret of the doors of a former small varieties theater closed up long ago, HARRY DICKSON, the American SHERLOCK HOLMES, motionless in the darkness of the empty hall, contemplates the most horrible spectacle to have germinated from the deranged brain of a music-loving murderer.

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It could, because of the miniature trees festooning the boulders, be some background of an old painting (CHRIST IN THE OLIVE GARDEN?) and yet it is not that, exactly.

On the small rise shaded by a pine tree in the freshly dug earth rests the body of CORA, the young white girl, and further on, decked out in the richest ornaments of his tribe, lie the remains of the young indian warrior who died for her.

His friend, the scout called "LONG RIFLE," sunk in grief, holds his hand out across this grave to the dead man's father CHINGACHGOOK, the old red-skinned chief in the "LAST OF THE MOHICANS," a book by the American novelist FENIMORE COOPER. In a strange mimetic relation with what is developed above, the Indian's face has the wild aspect of the stone landscapes by the Italian painter MANTEGNA.

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It could be the junction of the by-road that takes TINTIN and MILOU to the castle of MOULINSART in the picture book "THE SEVEN CRYSTAL BALLS" by the Belgian artist and scenario writer HERGE.

I am not sure but it seems to me that the sky is suddenly overcast and that a strange calm grips the atmosphere; a flight of rooks wings slowly by. They will not reach the castle gates before the first big drops have fallen. TINTIN hurries and casts a distrustful eye on an unusually shaped cloud.

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Two Poems by Steve Benson

LIVING WITH YOU

I am in your living room when you are not thinking of me.
I crawl in your lap, like an amphibian
just recently awakened from the sea.
I look around with a dead stare.

I am something you've misplaced, a peel
you meant to pick up, a letter your read in a dream
and never answered. Somewhere right around the eye.

I watch you tearing articles out of newspapers to send
your kids.
I sit on the toilet with you.
I criticize your wardrobe when you're looking okay.
I undermine your mind casually during a break in your affairs.

I like your records, your hair, your thoughts,
your stubby body—otherwise I'd never stay.
I like the warmth of your arms
crossed over your chest in sleep
and the lazy violent armpits,
the soft flutter of your behind.
Your dreams are the crassest thing about you.

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TERRORIST IN BEL AIR

I lack community.

I am like a towel being snapped from hand A
to ass B, I weep and claw
like a starlet on the wrong drugs, I'm a cataract
dangling in the eye of a summer hurricane.

Why try to define at all?

I burnish my pants with synthetic oil
and put racist telegrams in return envelopes.
The largest lawyers in the world
want to come sit on me. Naked TV wrestlers
turn my arm through the gentle ambience of Newtonian
space.
I let my pants down to the rulers of the world,
who mumble after me.
Draped in a tangled sheet,
I await their judgment and learn to play guitar
as though it were a new machine for secretaries.
The shells weep, uncertain themselves
of the pea's whereabouts.

I consider making myself hypothetical
full-time.

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Kent Ekberg

NEW YORK COOL

Tonight I saw Dustin Hoffman
walking down Lexington Avenue.
He lives on 61st Street
and is a neighbor of mine,
you know.
He was a neighbor of mine
when I lived on 12th Street
and he lived on 11th,
before the Weathermen
blew the block up (and themselves)
by mistake,
although, of course,
we didn't know each other then, either.
Once, however,
when I worked in a liquor store
we talked of red bordeaux.
This I have done with Kevin McCarthy, Madame Malraux,
Sumner Locke Eliot, Mrs. Lindsay, Gilbert Highet
and a host of others—tra-la, tra-la.

I have even imagined selling La Fite
to Lillian Hellman on Park Avenue.
I have, in fact, sold
"test tape" to Stanley Kunitz
and "Sinu-tab" to Howard Moss,
when I worked in that little drug
store on 6th Avenue, just across
from where eec lived years ago.

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One of my most interesting
conversations
was with Donald Barthelme
about a screw-driver.
This was the year he won
the NBA for children's literature.

These are the short stories of a salesclerk.
Above me lived a French woman
who had been a chamber maid
at the Plaza for twenty years.
What stories she had to tell.
Before they took her away
she would curse in French
at the dogs barking
in the courtyard below her window.
Oh what music they made together!

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William Crain

TEARS ON THE QUADRANGLE

I was warm on the quadrangle
Warm on the grass by the library steps
Eating my sandwich
Watching the bees lunch on the clover
Waiting for Tinsley.

There was much more:
Fishel Cornfield was starting the mower
By the Physics Department
A magnolia branch nudged the portico
Of the Administration Building
The air wafted grass and magnolias
Tinsley was not there.

Dean Phelps introduced a foreigner
To the Chairman of the Romance Languages Department
(The foreigner had misused the conditional)
The Theater of Ubu Ensemble
Marched in funereal splendor
Towards the Drama Department
Bearing on their shoulders
A huge burning book
Tinsley was late again.

A Marxist-Leninist handed me a leaflet:
"We feel that Professor Pelham
—A registered Republican
And contributor to *The National Review*—
Is unqualified to teach the course:
'Economies of Underdeveloped Nations'."
A ladybug perched on my arm.

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Tinsley was talking
Almost before I saw her:
"I was almost in the post office
And Alice Winterson asked me
Who I had for Civil War History
And I said,
'Carpoff—the old asshole'
And I turned around
And there was Professor Carpoff
Looking like Lee at Appomatox."
She strained in one last exclamation:
"Civil War History is required for my major!"

The ladybug flew away
Her face puckered and flushed
Tears overspread her cheeks
I lifted her in my arms
And started to laugh
The air was warm with grass and magnolias.

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THE HITCHHIKER

As soon as I climb into the car
I fold my dark blanket
and close my eyes against it
and the locked door.
She speaks a few words,
the air from the vent ruffling
her dress an inch above her knees.
With my left hand I slide out
the knife, unfold it under my arm
and wait for her to grow silent.
You are horrified.
Do you wish to understand?
Take the page this is written on,
hold it up, the edge dry
and tight, slide it
quickly across your tongue
and taste between your lips
the road unfolding
from my dreams.

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SNAKE HILL

Beyond the bumper-cars
of Kaydeross Amusement Park
the hill rises two miles away
at the edge of Saratoga Lake
the great green head of an Earth snake

a hermit lived there
in the days when horses
followed the dirt road
at the water's edge
he made his living
from the bounty paid on rattlesnakes

each month at the County Seat
he brought in bags
filled with clicking rings
cut from the tails of arrow-headed rattlers

he had Indian blood
some people said
and wondered how
he found so many
every year and if
the words he used as
he stepped among the rocks
were the same as those we spoke

when he died
and people went to get
his few possessions
from his shack
they found in back
two dozen cages filled
with fat and drowsing tailless rattlesnakes.

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AWAY FROM THE HOUSE

The footprints lead
past crocuses and dahlias,
corn stalks and rustling leaves
into deep snow.

They belong to no one,
bits and pieces of you
left in them returning
to featureless soil,
the way a broken bottle
on a rolling beach
loses itself in grains of sand.

Your body is this house,
collapsing into the seasons.

You are following those footprints,
intent as a hound,
moving, moving,
away from the house.

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A.E. Bulman

THE REVISION

I still liked anyothertime,
anyotherplace. which means most
of my life, but it was now,
here, so I felt my life becoming sad.
and I was thinking this
too shall pass into later.
somewherelse. but I was getting sadder.
so I saw a new now and a new here. later.
and this now and this here
would be excluded from anyothertime
anyotherplace. later.

and I began thinking about anyothertime
anyotherplace. which means most
of my life.

and I didn't like it anymore.

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Two Poems by Edwin Kaye

BEFORE SLEEP

if you rub the back of your child
at bedtime
his wife will be happy

if you kiss him goodnight
and tuck the blankets
at bedtime
his children will love him

if you sing to your child at bedtime
he will have comfort
when he dies

NOT THE HUNTER

if my children are lions
let me be the tall grass

if they are horses
better the shade tree
than a groom or rider

if they are fish
in the open sea
I will not be the net
that brings them home

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Joel Stein

ANTHOLOGY

It's raining for some reason over West St. Clair St.
That merges in a cloud bank with Riddle Rd.;
Evening Star Lane lent me to kiss Iris one fine night
But only Celestial St. could reduce the soul to fine ash.

The vote was shaky on shady Mt. Auburn
Before you and I had taken to drink on Clifton Ave.
And visit again the smouldering rooms on Calhoun St.

The first laughable sin was on Eden Ave.
From which Victory Parkway runs forever east
To where the idea of a desert on Terrace Ave.
Was as funny as the pain on Hosea St.
Or the hopes delicately held on Whitfield Ave.

McMillan St. is on television
Viewed from the cubbyholes of Thrill St.
But the ice is bad today on Vine
Which runs into Jefferson like a fart
And the garbage will set out tonight on Bishop St.

Now the bones are drying on Elder Street;
Elm has managed to Spring Grove Ave.;
Harrison Ave. defeated the tide of small businessmen
At the intersection of Hippodrome and Gregory Sts.

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But later in the perturbing Evening Star Lane
Is heard the Inter-State Beltway
Tightening its belt around Straight Street;
Can the vanity and delusion of Howell St.
Survive? Will the Grandin Blvd.
Be set upon with detours:
"Travel at your own risk"? Ken Arbre
Harbors the fate of you and I.

Highway of aquatic dreams, River Road,
Whence does thy pathway lead us—
To righteousness,
Highway 52?

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

FICTION

William Reese Hamilton (*Belly Up*) grew up in China and the Phillippines. The publication of this selection from his novel, *Playing Harry*, is his first appearance in print.

Lamar Herrin (*The Rookie Season*) won the Aga Khan Fiction Award for 1974 for his story *The Rio Loja Ringmaster.* That story and this one are both from his first novel, *The Rio Loja Ringmaster,* to be published by Viking this fall.

Bart Midwood (*John O'Neill Versus the Crown*) has been published in *Esquire, The Atlantic* and elsewhere. He is the author of *Bodkin,* a novel, and a collection of stories, *Phantoms.*

Richard Stern (*Aurelia Frequenzia Reveals the Heart and Mind of the Man of Destiny*) is the author of *Stitch, Golk, Other Men's Daughters, 1968* and *In Any Case* among other fictions. A version of the imaginary interview appeared in his 'orderly miscellany', *The Books in Fred Hampton's Apartment.*

INTERVIEW

Thomas LeClair's essays and reviews have appeared in *Contemporary Literature, The New Republic,* the *New York Times* and elsewhere. He teaches English at the University of Cincinnati.

POETRY

Sam Abrams' last book was *The Post American Cultural Congress* (Bobbs-Merrill, 1974); his next is *The Laws,* a prophetic *cento* of texts by Plato, L.S.B. Leakey and others (Jargon Society).

Steve Benson's poems have appeared in *Truck, Streets & Roads, The Los Angeles Review* and other magazines. He is "an exemplary member of *L.A. Fame.*"

Phil Boiarski's poetry has been published in a number of magazines including *The Rocky Mountain Review* and *The Ohio Journal* and has work forthcoming in *The California Quarterly.* He is active in Ohio's Poets in the Schools program and the Association for Poetry Therapy.

Joseph Bruchac works for Skidmore College's University Without Walls Program as the coordinator of a college program in a maximum security prison. His most recent books include *Turkey Brother* (The Crossing Press), a collection of Iroquois folk tales and *The Road to Black Mountain* (Thorp Springs Press), a novel. Late this spring *This Earth Is a Drum,* a collection of poems, will be published by Cold Mountain Press. He is the editor of *The Greenfield Review.*

Aaron Bulman's poems have appeared in the *Christian Science Monitor, Jewish Currents, Voices International* and a few other magazines.

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William Crain received his M.A. from Harvard in Comparative Literature and began writing in 1975. He is employed by the San Francisco Newspaper Printing Co. where he answers the phone. This is his first publication.

Kent Ekberg teaches in the English Department of Queens College. He is at work in a dissertation on Anäis Nin for his doctorate at New York University. His poetry has been published in *The Word* and is forthcoming in *Dogsoldier.*

Edward Hirsch has published poems and essays in *Antioch Review, The Nation, Poetry Northwest, Sewanee Review* and *Southern Review,* among others. He lives in Philadelphia.

Edwin Kaye's poems in this issue are his first published work.

Jane Kenyon has recently moved to an old farm in Wilmot, New Hampshire. With co-editor Joyce Peseroff, she is about to bring out the first issue of *Green House*, a magazine of poetry. Her poetry has appeared in *The Nation, APR, Michigan Quarterly Review, The Paris Review* and elsewhere.

Everette Maddox is Poet-in-Residence at Xavier University of Louisiana (New Orleans) and lives in an apartment once occupied by F. Scott Fitzgerald. His poems have appeared in *The Paris Review* (#58) and in numerous other publications.

Dan Masterson lives in Pearl River, N.Y. This is his first appearance in *The Paris Review.*

W.S. Merwin is the author of numerous books of poetry and translations including *Writings to an Unfinished Accompaniment, Asian Figures, Transparents of the World, The Carrier of Ladders,* for which he won the Pulitzer Prize in 1972, and *The First Four Books of Poems.*

Ed Orchester teaches at the University of Pittsburgh. His poems have recently appeared or are forthcoming in *Poetry Now, APR, Minnesota Review,* etc. His most recent books of poems, *Dancing on the Edges of Knives* (Univ. of Missouri Press) won the Devins Award in 1973.

James Paul's poems have appeared in *The Seneca Review, The Antioch Review* and elsewhere; one is forthcoming in *The New Yorker.* He is currently writing a thesis on *Pearl* at the University of Michigan.

Paul J.J. Payack's most recent collections include *Solstice* (Samisdat Press, 1975), "Legend of the Shaman" in the *Windows in the Stone* anthology (Free Press, 1974) and *A Ripple in Entropy* (Chithon Press, 1973). A graduate of Harvard, he currently resides in Stow, Massachusetts.

Peter Payack is the editor of *Phone-A-Poem*, a Cambridge-based poetry hotline, and has published two poetry chapbooks this year, *The Babbling Fool* (Mother's Hen) and *No Free Will in Tomatoes* (Quark Press). This is his third appearance in *The Paris Review.*

A.F. Roberts was born in Gloucestershire, England, and is a graduate of Oxford University. He lives in Paris with his wife and son, working as a translator and writing poetry. "Parrots and Africas" is his first published poem.

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Joel Stein is originally from Hampton, Virginia. He is a recent graduate of the Iowa Writer's Workshop. This is his first appearance in *The Paris Review*. Other poems are forthcoming in *The Vanderbilt Poetry Review* and *Blackberry*.

Brian Swann's latest book of poems is *Roots* (New Rivers). Later this year, a book of fiction, *Liking the Sky*, will be published by Latitudes Press and in August, Princeton will publish *Selected Poems of Tudor Arghezi* (translated with Michael Impey).

FEATURE

John Train was managing editor of the magazine from 1953-54 and from 1956-59. Now an investment counselor and President of Train, Cabot, Counsel and Associates in New York City, he is the author of *Dance of the Money Bees* (Harper & Row, 1975).

ART

Marc Eisenberg was born in New York City in 1948 and attended the School of the Visual Arts. He is represented jointly by J.H. Duffy and Sons and Prints on Prince Street.

Jean Le Gac is an artist living in Paris. He is represented in New York by John Gibson Gallery.

Dalia Ramanauskas was born in Kaunas, Lithuania. She resided for a while in Germany before coming to the United States in 1949. She is represented in New York by Hundred Acres Gallery, and her work is in several museums' collections. She currently lives in Ivoryton, Connecticut.

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